

**YOUTH MASTER PLANNING
IN THE UNITED STATES**

by

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Youth Master Planning in the United States

Thesis directed by Professor Willem van Vliet--

ABSTRACT

Youth master planning represents a new planning specialization that began in the late 1980s to improve the lives of children and youth. Youth master planning is aligned with the normative frameworks of advocacy planning and participatory planning in that adults are encouraged to advocate for the needs of children and youth and meaningfully engage them in community decision-making. As an outcome of this process, youth master plan documents provide a general guide for becoming a better place for young people to grow up and follow an asset-based model. Both the processes and the resulting documents are often used to facilitate the collaboration between community entities.

This exploratory research about youth master planning provides a useful overview with specific recommendations. Using multiple methods, including a

questionnaire, the content analysis of 38 youth master plan documents, and phone interviews in four communities, I developed a comprehensive overview of youth master planning and determined how youth participation, the physical environment, and population diversity are addressed.

I found that all three of these focus areas are covered in most plans, with youth participation as the most prevalent. Specifically, youth master plans address opportunities for youth participation in everyday community life and in community governance to a relatively equal degree.

Youth master plans address issues related to the physical environment, such as alternative transportation and the provision and accessibility of spaces used by children and youth. However, the recommendations regarding the physical environment do not include specific implementation strategies and are very vague.

Youth master plans also communicate a general awareness of population diversity and in some cases, include specific examples of how to create a more inclusive community, such as providing low-cost programs. However, most plans do not provide specific recommendations to ensure the needs of *all* children and youth are met and that diverse children and youth participate in the opportunities provided.

Despite the alignment of youth master planning with advocacy and participatory planning theories, I found that land use planners and landscape architects are not heavily involved in youth master planning. I recommend youth

master planning as a future area of concentration for the design and planning professions.

This abstract accurately represents the content of the candidate's thesis. I recommend its publication.

Signed

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the reviewer.

Willem van Vliet--

DEDICATION PAGE

I dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Maya. I hope she can grow up in a community that is child-friendly and enables her to thrive. I also dedicate this to my husband, Jeff, for his patience, support, and understanding through this long process. And finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents who have always supported me and helped me in countless ways. I love you all.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH MASTER PLANNING

Prior Work on Youth Master Planning

In the United States, communities are beginning to focus more on addressing the needs of their children and youth members. Yet, this has been the focus of efforts internationally for some time. With the adoption of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UNCRC) in 1989, the establishment of networks related to child-friendly cities (CFC) in Europe, Canada and Australia, and the development of CFC initiatives in cities all over the world, it is clear that this work is happening on multiple levels around the globe (van Vliet--, 2008, p. 10).

One way that US communities are determining how to be more child- and youth-friendly is through **youth master planning**. According to Michael Karpman with the National League of Cities (2007), youth master planning is:

A cutting-edge process that brings together key stakeholders – including young people, parents, city governments, the school district, businesses, community and faith-based organizations, and others – to set long-term, community-wide priorities for young people and take specific action steps toward those goals.

Prior to conducting this study, I read several reports produced by the *National League of Cities* that provide suggestions for a youth master planning process and make claims that developing a plan can transform how communities perceive young people and lead to sustainable benefits. (Karpman, 2007; Borut & Johnson, n.d.). Based on information in these reports and an Internet search, I discovered that **youth master plans have become increasingly common in the United States over the last two decades.**

However, aside from grey literature, **I was not able to identify any comprehensive evaluation of youth master plans** that determined what communities expect to accomplish and what is actually accomplished by creating one. Although individual communities may conduct assessments of their own plan to understand the impact that it has, there did not seem to be empirical research that examined possible outcomes experienced by communities with youth master plans. Therefore, I undertook this research to address this gap and understand if youth master planning has the potential to inform positive future actions. This research is exploratory in nature and does not attempt to test a hypothesis about youth master planning.

Importance of this Research

Creating communities that accommodate the needs of children and youth requires an interdisciplinary and comprehensive process with input from multiple stakeholders,

including young people themselves. Communities that are friendly to young people must also be family-friendly, sustainable, walkable, and aging-friendly, among other things. Therefore, when a community is a good place for young people to live and grow up, it is often a good place for *all* people and enables healthy and satisfying lifestyle options. The UN Habitat agenda, adopted in 1996, establishes that the wellbeing of children can be used as an indicator of a healthy society for all age groups (van Vliet--, 2008, p. 12).

Although there are several terms used to describe initiatives focused on creating better communities for young people, the most commonly used are “Child-Friendly City” and “Child-and Youth-Friendly Community”. Several groups involved with child-friendly city initiatives have published definitions, including:

“A child and youth friendly city is one that encompasses all aspects of a child and youth's healthy development¹ including opportunities for connection, self-efficacy, and engagement.” (Vancouver Working Group Discussion Paper)

“Youth friendly communities value the importance of play for youth and recognize that, through play, youth have the opportunity to develop socially, physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically. To that end, communities that are youth friendly ensure that they offer a variety of play activities (e.g. sport, arts, recreation, leadership development), develop partnerships at the community level to support youth opportunities, celebrate and recognize the contributions of youth and encourage young people to connect with their community to become involved as volunteers and community leaders.” (Play Works Partnership, 2005)

¹ Emphasis added to each definition.

“A child-friendly city has a system of governance committed to the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child” and “a child friendly city has to deal with the child holistically, ensuring that all sectors converge to provide an integrated response to the indivisible demands of children”. (Riggio, 2002)

“... a city, or any local system of governance, committed to fulfilling children's rights. It is a city where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are an integral part of public policies, programmes and decisions. It is, as a result, a city that is fit for all.” (Child Friendly Cities Initiative, UNICEF website)

These four definitions focus on different aspects of a child-friendly city and include a wide spectrum of important issues, including: healthy development, play, governance, and rights. Surprisingly, the youth master plans I evaluated did not reference this international work on child- and youth-friendly communities. Yet, youth master planning is a growing area of planning and one that many communities in the United States are undertaking to address the needs of their children, youth and families. Therefore, a careful evaluation of youth master planning is critical in order to inform future work on child- and youth-friendly communities.

In addition, at least three communities have created youth master plans since I completed this research in early 2011. It is likely that other communities have also begun the process of creating a plan. As communities around the country create new plans, this research can help them decide what to focus on and what components to include.

As practicing planners become more aware of and begin to participate in projects focused on young people, knowledge of youth master planning and the projected outcomes will be important in order to communicate effectively with other community members. In some cases, knowing about youth master planning will help set planners apart from other community leaders who are knowledgeable about youth needs, but do not know how to write an effective plan.

As an academic, I conduct research in order to improve practice. This exploratory research on youth master planning will provide a basis for future research on policies and practices to improve communities for young people. In addition, a more in-depth investigation into the practices and physical environment of individual communities could build on this research.

Research Tasks

To complete this research, I focused on two main tasks:

- 1) Provide a **comprehensive overview of youth master plans** created and implemented by communities across the United States to understand what youth master plans are, what it takes to create them, and the different focus areas they include.

2) Assess how youth master plans address issues related to I) **youth participation**; II) the **physical environment**; and III) **diversity and equal representation**. According to research literature I describe in the findings chapters (five, six, and seven) of this dissertation, these three areas are important aspects of creating child- and youth-friendly communities. Two of these areas are specifically mentioned in relation to criteria developed for a child-friendly city, the physical environment and the participation of children and youth (van Vliet--, 2008, p.13). The third area, diversity and equal representation is an idea embedded throughout the UNCRC and is addressed in the preamble through the language:

*Recognizing that the United Nations has, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the International Covenants on Human Rights, proclaimed and agreed that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, **without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>)*

Much of the existing youth engagement and youth governance research emphasizes a youth development framework and the impacts on individual youth (Yates & Youniss, 1996; Schamber & Mahoney, 2008). My research goes beyond the impacts on the individual person to look at the **community-scale impacts of youth master planning** and how it may or may not result in the preparation of guidelines for creating a child- and youth-friendly community. For planners working to improve

communities and increase their livability, determining the community-scale impacts is likely more relevant than the individual impacts.

Although youth master plans vary greatly among different communities, I created the following general definition to help determine which documents I included in this study:

Youth Master Plans, also referred to as children and youth strategic plans or similar titles, are comprehensive planning documents prepared and implemented by communities to provide an overview of the wellbeing of the community's young people and present a vision for the future with goals, objectives, and strategies for addressing the needs, issues, and requests of those young people.

My second research task involved determining how youth master plans address topics related to **youth participation, the physical environment, and diversity/equal representation**. Specifically, I focused on these three areas for the following reasons:

Youth Participation

Scholars generally agree that youth participation is a valuable addition to community decision-making when: it is meaningful and does not simply represent empty political rhetoric; community-wide opportunities for participation are provided that address the barriers faced by youth; and communities acknowledge youth as valuable resources rather than simply recipients of knowledge and services. In addition, many scholars have identified varying levels or types of youth participation, including

Arnstein (1969), Hart (1997), Chawla (2001), Shier (2001), and Driskell (2002).

Although I was not able to assess the *level of participation* that occurred during the creation of youth master plans and whether that participation was meaningful for the youth, I instead set out to determine the varying formats of participation emphasized in the plans. In addition, I investigated if and how youth participate in the creation and/or implementation of youth master plans. By investigating these issues, I was able to determine how communities address both short-term and long-term participation opportunities.

Physical Environment

Although research on the physical environment includes a number of individual topics, there is a general focus on the access and use of natural areas, urban green spaces, parks, playgrounds, and transportation systems. In addition, research supports careful consideration of the social and behavioral impacts that the physical environment may have on the lives of children and youth. In order to determine what, if any, specific topics related to the physical environment are included by youth master plans, I investigated how each topic was described and whether the communities provided specific guidelines for creating child- and youth-friendly spaces. In addition, since two-dimensional maps or plans are a common way to portray spatial relationships and other physical aspects of a community, I examined whether youth master plans include these to communicate their recommendations.

Diversity and Equal Representation

Although the extent to which a community needs to address diversity depends, in part, on its specific demographics, the diversity of young people is an important consideration in most communities today. The research on diversity and equal representation often supports the need for the participation of diverse youth, yet acknowledges the difficulties in effectively accomplishing this. In an effort to meet this challenge, some programs and organizations have used targeted participation techniques to ensure that diverse youth participate in program activities and initiatives.

In order to understand how youth master plans address this issue, I first investigated whether the plans describe the diversity of the community populations. I then asked if and how diverse interests, opportunities, and places are accommodated in the plans. Mohammad Qadeer (1997, p. 482) raises the point that the effectiveness of planning can be determined by how well it accommodates and responds to citizens' diverse social and cultural needs. I examined whether youth master plans fit this measure of effectiveness.

The Who, How, Why, and What of Youth Master Plans

Who

Youth master plans are created in predominately mid-size cities and counties that are relatively affluent. Eighty percent² (32 out of 40) of the communities that created them have less than 200,000 people and 85 percent (34 out of 40) have a higher per capita income than the national average of \$21,587. Sixty-eight percent (27 out of 40) of the communities have a lower percentage of white people than the average community in the US, indicating that those with youth master plans are slightly more diverse than the average community.

Multiple stakeholder groups are involved in the creation of youth master plans. The median number of different stakeholder groups involved was 11. However, there was no statistical correlation between involving a greater number of stakeholder groups and a focus on collaboration/coordination between community entities. Half of the communities (19 out of 38) that created youth master plans hired outside consultants to help facilitate the creation process and/or write the plan.

² All of the statistics listed in this section are based on slightly different N values. For example, to calculate statistics based on census data, I used the total number of communities with youth master plans, not including the HoChunk Nation for which I could not find census data. For statistics I determined from reviewing the youth master plans, such as the number of communities that hired consultants, I used an N value of 38. For statistics that came directly from answers in the questionnaire I use an N equal to the total number of communities that answered each specific question. Since not all communities answered every question, this number is different for each question.

How

The earliest youth master plan was created in 1990, although most (72 percent, 27 out of 38) were created in 2000 or later. For 95 percent of communities (21 out of 22), adoption is approved by a city council or similar entity. Only one community that answered the questionnaire also sought approval from their youth council. Most of the plans (85 percent, 17 out of 20) are not enforceable, but are seen as general guidelines. The two most common reasons for the successful creation of a youth master plan include having the support of community leaders (33 percent, 7 out of 21) and the ability for multiple departments to cooperate on youth issues (33 percent, 7 out of 21).

To implement the plans, communities (N=19) most often have staff available (78 percent, 15 out of 19) and designate internal city or county funding (67 percent, 13 out of 19). Less common resources include: volunteers (33 percent, 6 out of 19); financial support through non-profits (28 percent, 5 out of 19); and grant funding (11 percent, 2 out of 19). The most common challenge that communities face while implementing their youth master plan is dealing with departmental silos and a lack of cooperation from staff and officials (56 percent, 10 out of 18). Similarly, the top recommendation for other communities and the most common change a community would make to their process if they were to do it over again was involving more stakeholders in the creation process, including the general public.

Why

The most common impetus for the creation of a youth master plan is to improve the general quality of the community for young people (indicated by 44 percent, 8 out of 18). Other reasons include: to implement programs for a youth council (17 percent, 3 out of 18); address a specific issue, such as youth violence (17 percent, 3 out of 18); as a special project of community leaders (17 percent, 3 out of 18); and to coordinate services and efforts (11 percent, 2 out of 18).

The two most common outcomes that communities hoped to achieve with their youth master plan include (N=21): improve the quality and accessibility of programs and services (67 percent, 14 out of 21); and increase civic engagement and youth voice (62 percent, 13 out of 21).

What

In general, the youth master plans I studied take a positive, asset-based approach to youth issues. Over half of the youth master plans (53 percent, 20 out of 38) referred to the Search Institute's 40 developmental assets that are based on youth development, resiliency, and prevention.

The three most common self-reported focus areas for the youth master plans include (N=26): addressing health issues related to behavioral, physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing (58 percent, 15 out of 26); ensuring the coordination and cooperation between community entities (58 percent, 15 out of 26); and civic engagement and participation of youth (58 percent, 15 out of 26). The three most common focus areas identified through the content analysis of the youth master plan documents include (N=38): youth participation (100%, 38 out of 38); diversity and equal representation (100%, 38 out of 38); and the physical environment (97%, 37 out of 38). The only community characteristic statistically associated with a focus area was community size. Eighty percent of communities with 100,000 people or less (18 out of 22) focused on collaboration/coordination. This is perhaps because smaller communities have fewer staff in each department and there is a greater need for collaboration between departments. I did not find any significant relationship between the focus areas and the department or agency in which the youth master plan was administered.

The most common actions taken to implement a youth master plan include (N=23): creating youth-focused programs and initiatives (32 percent, 7 out of 23); and offering classes and trainings focused on the goals of the youth master plan (26 percent, 6 out of 23). The two most commonly cited outcomes that happened as a result of the youth master plan were (N=23): the recognition of youth's assets and a

new focus on youth engagement in the community (39 percent, 9 out of 23); and an increase in collaboration between departments or agencies (35 percent, 8 out of 23).

Variations in Youth Master Plans

For most of the inquiries related to my three focus areas, I found significant variation among the youth master plans. For example, some plans are quite thorough in how they address an issue such as youth participation. Yet, other plans do not cover this topic except for a very general statement about the importance of providing youth with opportunities to participate in the community. Despite the varied nature of the plans, I was able to identify general trends regarding these focus areas.

I found that most plans cover all three of these focus areas, with youth participation as the most prevalent. Specifically, youth master plans address opportunities for youth participation in everyday community life and in community governance to a relatively equal degree.

Youth master plans also address issues related to the physical environment, such as alternative transportation and the provision and accessibility of spaces used by children and youth. However, the recommendations regarding the physical environment do not include specific implementation strategies.

Youth master plans also communicate a general awareness of population diversity and in some cases, include specific examples of how to create a more inclusive community, such as providing low-cost programs. However, most plans do not provide specific recommendations to ensure the needs of *all* children and youth are met and that diverse children and youth participate in the opportunities provided.

Dissertation Outline

I have organized the rest of this dissertation according to the following outline. In Chapter Two I discuss the theoretical framework for my research, including the different planning theories that informed my investigation. In addition, I briefly discuss the research literature related to child- and youth-friendly cities. In Chapter Three I provide an overview of my three research methods (a questionnaire, content analysis, and phone interviews) and describe in detail how I chose the youth master plans to include in this study. In the next four chapters I describe my findings. Specifically, in Chapter Four I include a general overview of youth master plans (YMPs)³ and in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven I include a detailed overview of my findings related to my three focus areas. Finally in Chapter Eight, I summarize my findings, recommend future directions for research, and describe the implications for this study.

³ From this point forward, I refer to youth master plans as YMPs.

CHAPTER TWO:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I frame my study within the context of previous research and relevant planning theories. Since YMPs are one way for communities to become more child- and youth-friendly, I start with a review of the child- and youth-friendly city (CYFC) and child rights work that has been done over time. Next, I provide a brief overview of planning theories that set the framework for YMPs. And finally, I briefly summarize the research literature related to youth master planning and my three focus areas, youth participation, the physical environment, and diversity/equal representation. I provide additional details of this literature within each of my findings chapters.

History of Child- and Youth-Friendly City Work

Today the major organizations involved with CYFC initiatives include UNICEF, UN Habitat, UNESCO, ChildWatch International, European Network of Child Friendly Cities, and International Society for Child Indicators. Additionally, many regional and national organizations, such as the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and the Society for Children and Youth in British Columbia, focus

on creating child- and youth-friendly communities. These organizations grew out of a long history of child-rights work. The timeline in Figure 2.1 highlights some of the major events in this work.

Figure 2.1: History of Child Rights Work, 1855 to 2009

1855	International Congresses of Welfare - Paris
1896	First International Congress for the Welfare and Protection of Children – Florence, Italy
1904	International Association for Child Welfare at the International Congress of Child Welfare in Antwerp
1946	The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) founded
1948	UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
1982	Urban Basic Services (UBS) approach was approved by UNICEF
1989	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - ratified
1990	Action Plan for Children agreed on at the World Summit for Children.
1992	UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit - Rio de Janeiro) 179 Nations adopted Agenda 21
1992	Mayors Defenders of Children Initiative was launched in Dakar, Senegal
1996	Child Friendly Cities Initiative was launched to act on the resolution passed during the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)
1998	First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth held in Lisbon, Portugal
2000	International Secretariat for Child-Friendly Cities at UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre, established in Florence, Italy
2002	UN Special Session on Children – New York, "A World Fit for Children"
2004	Second Intergovernmental Conference on Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children - Sarajevo
2008	Child in the City conference organized by the European Network on Child Friendly Cities held in Rotterdam, Germany
2009	Children's Rights at a Cross-Roads: A Global Conference for the 20th anniversary of the UNCRC in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

This work started after the European revolutions in Paris with the *International Congresses of Welfare* in 1855, during which numerous resolutions were passed to address child protection, infant welfare, guardianship, compulsory school attendance, and child labor (Fuchs, 2007). At the end of that century, the *International Congresses of the Care and Protection of the Child* focused on the social aspects of child welfare (Fuchs, 2007, p. 396). Belgium and France led the international community to reform the child juvenile system and identify social conditions for deprived children that began to address delinquency and child neglect. A parallel sequence of international conferences occurred with the *International Congress for the Welfare and Protection of Children* in Florence in 1896, Budapest in 1899, and London in 1902. These efforts were consistent with the creation of the *International Association for Child Welfare* at the *International Congress of Child Welfare* in Antwerp in 1904 (Fuchs, 2007, p. 397).

The next major event occurred in 1946, with the establishment of the *UN International Children's Emergency Fund* to aid children devastated by World War II. When first established, this aid program was only to last until 1950, but was later approved by the UN General Assembly in 1953 to become a permanent UN agency currently known as the United Nations Children's Fund or UNICEF (Cousins, 1992; Fuchs, 2007; Morris, 2004). Before UNICEF became a permanent entity, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 to

protect basic human rights for all. This Declaration includes two articles specifically focused on children's rights to protection and education:

Article 24

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

(1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

In 1961, UNICEF began to focus on urban improvement projects with a pilot project in Mexico City (Cousins 1992, p. 10). Until that time, UNICEF had focused its efforts on rural areas of the world. However, with the rapid influx of people from villages to cities in Latin America and the declining conditions for urban children and youth in slums and shantytowns in Mexico City, UNICEF refocused its efforts on urban areas and chose Mexico City as its first urban project. The urban basic services (UBS) approach grew out of this pilot project in Mexico. The approach was officially

developed by Dr. William B. Cousins, UNICEF program officer, and approved in 1982 by the General Assembly (p. 27). This approach focused on improving the extremely poor conditions faced by women and children living in slums and informal urban settlements and included improvements in childcare, education, shelter, water and sanitation services, health, and employment. The UBS approach also included a strong emphasis on community participation (Cousins, 1992; Racelis, 2002) as well as local aid and self-help for women and children in slum areas (Blanc, 1994).

The focus on participation was also present in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was ratified in 1989. The CRC established an international declaration of child rights and is based on the premise put forth in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* that each child is entitled to special care and assistance. The CRC protects child-specific rights for anyone under the age of 18 and an independent committee of experts, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, was established to monitor its implementation. To date, the CRC has been ratified by all 195 UN member nations except Somalia and the United States (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2008).

In the year following the ratification of the CRC, the UN hosted the 1990 *World Summit for Children*. A total of 158 UN member nations were represented at the Summit and agreed to the *Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development*

of Children as well as a *Plan of Action* for implementing the Declaration in the 1990s. The *Plan of Action* is intended as a guide on both the national and international levels and should include national governments, international organizations, bi-lateral aid agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (UNICEF Website, 2008).

In 1992, 179 UN member nations adopted Agenda 21 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro. This was a significant step in acknowledging children and youth as a major group to involve in the creation and implementation of strategies to sustain a healthy environment (Chawla, 2002, p. 12). Section III of Agenda 21 specifically focuses on strengthening the role of major groups in sustainable development, and includes the following reasons for involving children and youth:

1. their intellectual contribution;
2. their ability to mobilize support; and
3. the unique perspective they bring to each situation (United Nations, Agenda 21, 1992).

In addition to their unique contribution to sustainable development, young people can be significantly affected by environmental problems, including harmful substances and pollutions in the air, water, and on the ground (Churchman, 2003). As noted by Malone (2001), “children are the most vulnerable to environmental and social

degradation, in terms of both their likelihood of personal harm and the constraints these place on their capacity to reach their fullest potential, they are at greatest risk.” (p.7).

Also in 1992, the *Mayors Defenders of Children Initiative* was launched by UNICEF in Dakar, Senegal, in order to involve municipal authorities in the implementation of child rights (Child Friendly Cities, 2009). Following this, in 1996, the *Child-Friendly Cities Initiative* (CFCI) was launched to implement the resolution passed during the second *UN Conference on Human Settlements* (Habitat II) and make cities livable places for all (Riggio, 2000).

As a major leader in the efforts to create child- and youth-friendly communities, the Italian government created the first *National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents* (Schulze & Moneti, 2007) to introduce program actions and provide guidelines for creating policies for children and cities. Its *Plan of Action* was implemented through the law, *Provisions to Promote Rights and Opportunities for Children and Adolescents*, which established a national fund to finance local projects focused on childhood. Then in 1998, another key UN event, the first *World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth* was held in Lisbon, Portugal, marking the culmination of more than a decade-long process to raise awareness about matters

important to youth among national and global leaders. The *Braga Youth Declaration* was adopted at this event as a blueprint for greater youth participation in governance.

Following the adoption of *the Braga Youth Declaration*, in 2000, UNICEF established the *International Secretariat for Child Friendly Cities* at the Innocenti Research Centre (IRC) in Florence, Italy to promote an understanding of child rights (Innocenti Research Centre Website, n.d.). The IRC analyzed successful methods and best practices in the area of children's rights and provided a system of information sharing to support communities becoming more child- and youth-friendly (Schulze & Moneti, 2007).

In May 2002, a UN Special Session on Children in New York brought together world leaders to discuss how to create a better world for children and develop a plan of action (UNICEF Website – Special Session, 2009). The document “A World Fit for Children” was adopted in 2002 and included a commitment from participating governments to:

- Put children first in all actions related to them;
- Eradicate poverty by investing in children and eliminating the worst forms of child labor;
- Leave no child behind and end all forms of discrimination affecting children;

- Care for every child and give them the best possible start in life by fighting infectious diseases, tackling malnutrition and ensuring a safe environment for healthy living and emotional and social development;
- Educate every child and eliminate gender disparities in education;
- Protect children from harm and exploitation;
- Protect children from war and conflict;
- Combat HIV/AIDS and protect children and families from its impact;
- Listen to children and ensure their participation as resourceful and capable citizens; and
- Protect the Earth for children and safeguard our natural environment.

Children and youth also participated in the *Special Session* as the governments of the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Togo had young people address the General Assembly. The participating young people helped create *A World Fit for Us* that outlines what young people want leaders to do and what young people can do to make their lives better (Children's Forum Report, 2002).

The participation of children and youth was also a major feature at the *Second Intergovernmental Conference on Making Europe and Central Asia Fit for Children*, which took place in Sarajevo in May, 2004 and included a background paper on children's participation in decision-making processes (Riggio, 2004). Also, in the

2005 report, *Innocenti Insight: Cities with Children – Child Friendly Cities in Italy*, UNICEF presents the results of a study to determine how Italian child-friendly cities have been established, what lessons have been learned, and the most effective policies to accomplish the established goals.

Additionally, many individual nations and regional groups have begun creating child- and youth-friendly city initiatives. The UNICEF Child-Friendly Cities website (<http://www.childfriendlycities.org/en/to-learn-more/examples-of-cfc-initiatives>) lists 59 countries as having child-friendly city initiatives. Although the site includes the United States as one of the countries having CFC initiatives, it only lists four initiatives (Chicago, Boston, Denver, and New York City) (<http://www.childfriendlycities.org/en/to-learn-more/examples-of-cfc-initiatives/united-states-of-america>). In addition, those listed are not all city-wide initiatives. For example, the Boston Schoolyard Initiative, which focuses on capital improvements at 64 out of 130 schools, is listed as a CFC initiative.

In the case of Denver, lessons learned from the initiative include: build effective partnerships; focus on the process of youth engagement as much as accomplishing the goals and developing a “product”; and understand that working with children and youth often takes more time and may require partnership training for adults and youth (Kingston et. al, 2007, p. 100).

Frameworks for Creating Child- and Youth-Friendly Cities

The UNICEF CFC Secretariat at Innocenti, developed a framework for defining and developing a child-friendly city (Schulze & Moneti, 2007). This framework (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004) was created with the intent that it will be adapted to suit multiple contexts and needs. The framework includes a checklist with general questions for a community to ask itself during assessment and contains nine “building blocks” of a CFC, including:

1. Promote **Children’s Participation** and active involvement to ensure the views of young people are heard and taken into consideration in decision-making processes;
2. Create a **Child-Friendly Legal Framework** to ensure the rights of children are protected in legislation and regulatory frameworks;
3. Develop a **City-Wide Children’s Rights Strategy** to ensure the development of a comprehensive strategy for the entire municipality based on the CRC;
4. Establish a **Children’s Rights Unit or Coordinating Mechanism** to ensure children’s perspectives are given priority;
5. Conduct a systematic **Child Impact Assessment and Evaluation** to assess the impact of law, policy and practice on children throughout the process;
6. Establish a **Children’s Budget** to ensure adequate resource commitment for children;

7. Produce a **Regular State of the City's Children Report** to ensure systematic monitoring of the state of all children in the municipality;
8. **Making Children's Rights Known** and ensuring that information about children's rights is disseminated to all children and adults in the municipality;
and
9. Support the **Independent Advocacy for Children** by non-governmental organizations and human rights institutions to promote children's rights (UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, 2004).

Similar to UNICEF's nine building blocks, the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) report, entitled *What Constitutes Child Friendly Communities and How are they Built* (Howard, 2006), identifies eight themes for encouraging child-friendliness within communities. These include:

1. **Welcome and Connection** - learning how to listen, plan and take action with local children;
2. **Value** – recognizing local children and their families as valuable contributors to community life;
3. **Safety** – providing safe places to play close to home and connecting communities with the care of children;

4. ***Meaningful Action and Self-Determination*** – developing a joint community vision and imagining together what a child-friendly community will look like locally;
5. ***Space*** - designing creative spaces for and with children and providing people with a reason to come into those spaces and use them;
6. ***Learning and Development*** – recognizing that learning and development happens in everyday places and in many different ways and that it is important to utilize these places and to document the processes and outcomes for children as they learn and grow in everyday spaces;
7. ***Support*** - establishing practical and friendly pathways for families to get services they need; and
8. ***Time*** - taking time and making time when working with children to counter the idea that consultation with children is a one-off event.

Frameworks have also been developed for specific aspects of CYFCs. For example the Foundation for Young Australians, together with the National Crime Prevention Program established a strategic framework for creating public spaces for young people (White, 1998, p. 4). This framework includes similar guidelines to those mentioned above, such as adopting a holistic approach and conducting research and evaluation. Yet, these guidelines are still not context specific or operationalized.

UNICEF, in conjunction with Childwatch International, the Children's Environments Research Group and the Bernard van Leer Foundation, has created a series of self-assessment tools for international communities. These tools include focus group/questionnaire protocols for children of different ages, as well as parents and service providers. They are being used in at least nine countries to determine the progress made toward fulfilling the rights of children and youth as described in the CRC (Child-Friendly Cities UNICEF, <http://www.childfriendlycities.org/en/research>).

In the next section I discuss planning theories that emphasize making communities better for marginalized populations. Although these theories are not limited to working with and on behalf of children and youth, I will discuss them in that context.

Relevant Planning Theories

As a specific type of master plan, a youth master plan focuses on a specific population group, children and youth. In the United States, children and youth are often seen as a marginalized population since they do not have the same rights as people over the age of 18, such as the right to vote or the right to work without restrictions. In planning, there is a history of assisting and working on behalf of disadvantaged populations.

This trend is also reflected in the current *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* of the American Planning Association and the American Institute of Certified Planners.

In relation to a planner's responsibility to the public, the code states:

We shall seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration. We shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions that oppose such needs.
(American Institute of Certified Planners, 2009)

Because of this trend, it is appropriate to review the planning theories related to the needs of marginalized populations and determine how youth master planning aligns with them. To do this, I first provide an overview of master planning as a process used to create a plan or guide for a community. I then focus on four planning theories: advocacy planning, participatory planning, insurgent or radical planning, and collaborative planning.

Master Planning

According to Webster's New World Law Dictionary (2006), the definition of a master plan is:

In land-use planning, a government entity's plan for the overall utilization of a particular area, including its allocation for residential or manufacturing uses and the corresponding environmental impacts.

In addition, there is a general acceptance that the components of a "plan" include: information/issues; vision/aims; objectives; strategies; and

implementation/actions/recommendations (MacCullum, 2008, p. 328; Healey, 1996, p. 267). John Friedman identified a similar list for policy analysis, and presented them as ordered stages:

1. Formulation of goals and objectives;
2. Identification and design of major alternatives to reach the goals and objectives;
3. Prediction of consequences;
4. Evaluation of consequences in relation to goals and objectives;
5. Decision based on information in previous steps;
6. Implementation of the decision; and
7. Feedback and assessment (Friedman, 1996, p. 22).

Plans that do not include all of these elements or steps can face public scrutiny or simply not function. Master planning has evolved over time and transitioned from identifying the locations of community resources to providing general policy principles that guide informed decisions at a later date (Dunham, 1958, p.12; Healey, 2003, p. 102). Studying the implementation of such plans involves exploring the **principles and norms** used in ongoing project development rather than simply analyzing the actual physical space (Healey, 2003, p. 103). Plans are also seen to perform multiple roles according to the intended audience and organization of

interest. By reading and analyzing a plan, the audience will discover which interests win and which lose and can lead to questions about the “fairness of the rules and the justice of the patterned outcomes” (Healey, 1996, p. 265). Planners acting as advocates for one particular population can assist the process of evaluating the fairness of a plan by identifying the underlying social values and evaluating the social costs and benefits to a particular population resulting from the plan (Davidoff, 1965, p. 333).

Evaluating the normative paradigm expressed in a master plan often reflects back on the planning theory used during its creation. In the next section, I present the general normative paradigms emphasized by four planning theories.

Advocacy Planning

Advocacy planning was developed in part as a response to the professional planners’ devotion to the physical plan and perceived disregard of the social aspects of planning (Clavel, 1994, p. 146). Advocacy planning was part of a larger movement in the 1960s during which professionals of multiple disciplines became advocates for low-income communities (Heskin, 1980, p.51). Paul Davidoff (1930-1984), often cited as a major influence on the planning profession, urged planners to advocate for diverse groups in public policy and planning practice (Checkoway, 1994, p. 140; Forester, 1994, p. 154). Davidoff suggested the planning profession be concerned with the

social realities of the urban environment rather than just the arrangement of urban spaces (Davidoff, 1965).

As advocacy planning evolved, advocate positions within city governments were established and planners were hired to “represent” the disadvantaged populations in a community (Clavel, 1994, p. 147). Through advocacy, it was believed that planners could **create a more pluralistic planning process and include the views of minorities and underrepresented groups** (Clavel, 1994, p. 146). In addition, the advocacy planner’s actions were believed to bring alternative views to the attention of public agencies and result in superior plans (Heskin, 1980, p. 57).

Davidoff (1965) indicated that the role of an advocacy planner includes **educating the public about the conditions, problems, and outlook of the population or group** to be represented, and to educate the specific population or group of their rights in a community and how planning and community government works. In addition, Davidoff suggested that advocacy planners pay special attention to **assisting the specific population with clarifying their ideas and giving voice to them** (Davidoff, 1965, p. 333). However, critics of advocacy planning pointed out that the poor lacked power and the ability to implement solutions (Heskin, 1980, p. 58).

Many of these same principles of advocacy planning - guidance, education, and giving voice to marginalized populations - are also identified in participatory planning theory. Below I give a brief overview of participatory planning, focusing specifically on the participation of children and youth in the planning process.

Participatory Planning

Participatory planning took advocacy planning a step further to provide a **process for including citizens in decision-making**. Although Davidoff was a supporter of citizen participation, he also recognized the need for the expertise and technical skills of the planner (Heskin, 1980, p.57). Participatory planning often emphasizes the process rather than the outcome, in which the process is just as important, if not more important, than the end product (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010, p. 361). The guiding norms that often describe this process include: reciprocity, openness/sensitivity to alternative forms of reasoning and expression, good communication, inclusiveness, and adaptability, among others (MacCallum, 2008, p. 326).

In the seminal article, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation” (1969), Sherry Arnstein identifies true citizen participation as a redistribution of power in which the ‘have-nots’ in society are given (or take) an opportunity to affect political, economic and social decisions. Arnstein identifies a typology that includes eight levels of

participation, shown as rungs on a ladder, ranging from non-participation (manipulation and therapy), to tokenism (informing, consultation, and placation), to citizen power (partnership, delegated power, citizen control) (pg. 217). But even strategies to encourage the participation of marginalized groups, including children and youth, can be counter-productive if they are done without efforts to address social inequality and disadvantage (Wise, 2001).

The participation of children and youth can be described as “a process through which young people solve problems and plan programs in the community” (Checkoway et al., 1995, p. 134). Roger Hart (1997) translated Arnstein’s ladder to reflect the participation of children and youth, recognizing the importance of developing agency and skills. Hart’s ladder included the following levels:

- Young people are manipulated (non-participation)
- Young people are decoration (non-participation)
- Young people are tokenized (non-participation)
- Young people are assigned and informed
- Young people are consulted and informed
- Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people
- Young people lead and initiate action
- Young people and adults share decision-making (p.41)

More recently, Hart (2008) reflected on how the ladder of participation had been interpreted. He clarified that it is not a “comprehensive tool” to assess the levels of participation by young people, but rather can be used to start a dialogue regarding critical issues in the work with children and youth (Hart, 2008, p. 19). Other scholars have contributed to this dialogue by developing additional models of young people’s participation. Henry Shier disregards the bottom (non-participation) levels identified by Hart to focus solely on levels of actual participation:

1. Children are listened to.
2. Children are supported in expressing their views.
3. Children’s views are taken into account.
4. Children are involved in the decision-making process.
5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making (Shier, 2001, p. 110).

Shier’s model also identifies three stages of commitment at each level: *opening* - representing an individual commitment or intent to work in a certain way; *opportunity* - taking the opening a step further to include having resources, skills and knowledge to enable a worker or organization to operate at a certain level; and finally, *obligation* - when the level of participation becomes an accepted policy of the worker or organization (Shier, 2001, p. 110).

Louise Chawla (2001) identifies various forms of participation (rather than levels) that can occur depending on many variables, including the interest level, skill level, and setting. The forms of participation include: prescribed, assigned, invited, negotiated, self-initiated negotiated, graduated, and collaborative (p. 3). David Driskell (2002) also adapted the 'ladder of participation' to remove the hierarchical nature and create something closer to the reality of participatory work, where there are not always clearly defined "levels" of participation.

Participation in decision-making processes should also include opportunities for children and youth to negotiate the structure and specific format for participation. The system of participation should be directly relevant to the lives of young people (Percy-Smith & Malone, 2001); and build on ways young people are already participating (Chawla, 2001). In addition, young people should be encouraged to take advantage of opportunities to participate regardless of class, gender or race (Chawla, 2001, p. 3).

Recent research has also shown that participation can occur within both conceptual and tangible space and includes the normative expression of valuing youth participation. These spaces include the attitudinal space that includes interactions between people and the acceptance or expectations of youth participation, the structural space that includes the specific organizational structure, the operational

space that includes the everyday processes in which youth participate, and the physical space that includes the place in which participation happens (Driskell & Kudva, 2009, p. 81).

Similar to advocacy planning theory, participatory planning theory focuses on inclusion and equality. This is also true for insurgent or radical planning theory described below.

Insurgent or Radical Planning

Insurgent planning, also referred to as radical planning, attempts to **realign the unjust and unequal levels of power that are often associated with class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender** (Beard, 2002, p. 18). It is based in part on the critique of top-down modernist planning for its inability to: include local people in decision-making, to deliver meaningful improvements at the local level, and to incorporate the diversity of needs in multicultural communities (Beard, 2002, p. 18). Often aligned with the ideas of insurgent and radical planning, multiculturalism in planning requires planners to be aware of race and culture and promote equity and the representation of minorities on public bodies (Qadeer, 1997, p. 493).

Leonie Sandercock (1998) focused attention on the history of insurgent planning. She posited that the mainstream history of the planning profession has been effectively

silent on the issue of racism, and if planning was “redefined” to include community building—grassroots organizing and self-help counter-planning for social and economic development—it would highlight the capacities of ordinary people to plan on their own behalf and minimize the role of traditional physical planners. Planning practices often originated from dominant cultural values and social norms and embed cultural biases in current policies and standards that are based on historical practices (Qadeer, 1997, p. 482). Therefore, it is critical to understand how planning policies have historically affected the quality of life and reinforced the oppression of groups such as homosexuals and racial minorities (Sandercock, 1998, p. 12).

Although insurgent planning is in many ways similar to advocacy planning, it is often differentiated as more oppositional in nature (Beard, 2003, p. 17). In one example, radical planning developed out of women’s participation in a state-sponsored program. With the skills learned through a participatory process, the women developed their own agenda and took their plans in a new direction (Beard, 2003, p. 22).

Finally, collaborative or communicative planning also involves the recognition of including multiple voices in the planning processes.

Collaborative or Communicative Planning

Patsy Healey discusses collaborative planning in relation to the interactive processes present in a community or governance structure (Healey, 2003, p. 106).

Communicative planning has also been described as action that fosters “community empowerment and the recognition of difference, diversity, and disadvantage that has implications for the development of discursive local democracy beyond the confines of specific issues” (Huxley & Yiftachel, 2000, p. 333).

Healey identifies the importance of a process during collaborative planning that is not merely a means to an end, but is significant in shaping participants’ sense of themselves and forming ways of thinking and acting that can be used in future participation (Healey, 2003, p. 111). Consensus building, as a process used in collaborative planning, can include the following conditions:

1. Inclusion of a full range of stakeholders;
2. A meaningful task with timely impact;
3. Participants who set their own rules and agendas;
4. A process of mutual understanding of interests;
5. Respectful dialogue;
6. Self organizing process unconstrained in time or content;
7. Accessible and fully shared information; and

8. An understanding that consensus is reached when all interests and avenues for satisfaction have been explored (Innes, 2004, p. 7).

This list represents a practical view of consensus building that takes into account diverse views and multiple knowledges (Innes, 2004, p. 9). In contrast, scholars have speculated that communicative processes merely offer the “hope of influencing decision-making” and appeasing conflicting interests in the short term (Foley & Lauria, 2000, p. 227).

Research on youth-focused inter-agency coordination has shown that communication to prevent duplication of services and cooperation, in terms of practitioners working together, were critical elements of successful collaborations (Okamoto, 2001, p.11). Five patterns that can lead to negative collaboration experiences were discovered in this same research: diffusion of responsibilities, blaming other agencies, withholding information between agencies, covering up mistakes, and prematurely terminating collaborative arrangements (Okamoto, 2001, p.12).

The four theories of planning I have described—advocacy planning, participatory planning, insurgent/radical planning, collaborative/communicative planning—overlap and begin to form the complete theoretical framework I used to assess YMPs. As a type of planning, youth master planning includes elements of promoting the rights of

all young people in a community (advocacy planning and insurgent/radical planning), including youth voice in decision making (participatory planning), and providing a structure for stakeholders to coordinate efforts for the benefit of young people (collaborative planning). I discuss this more thoroughly in *Chapter Eight: Conclusion and Discussion*.

In the final section of this chapter, I focus on previous research related to youth master planning.

Previous Research on Youth Master Planning

My research focuses on youth master planning within the United States. Yet, through numerous literature searches over the course of a year, I found very little academic research on YMPs. I have identified only two international studies, one from Ireland and one from Australia, which evaluate documents similar to YMPs.

Grey literature is available through the National League of Cities (NLC) – Institute for Youth, Education and Families, although, it is minimal and based predominately on anecdotal evidence. In particular, I have identified two documents published by the NLC focused on youth master planning: the transcript for an audio-conference titled, “Thinking Ahead: How to Develop a Comprehensive Citywide Plan for Children and Youth” (Andrews, 2008b); and “Creating a YMP: Action kit for

municipal leaders” (Andrews, 2008a). Although both of these documents contribute to the discussion about YMPs in the context of US communities and are based on actual experiences, they do little to advance the theoretical understanding of YMPs and what impact they can have on young people, if any.

According to the NLC’s Action Kit, a YMP has value as both a product and a process (Andrews, 2008a). As a product, it provides a vision of the community as well as a roadmap for achieving and sustaining this vision. As a process, it brings together stakeholders across the community to create that vision, focusing on the coordination of efforts and resources toward improving the lives of young people. In addition, other benefits may include: reduced fragmentation among individual agencies and organizations; the perception of youth as valuable assets to the community; and opportunities for youth to become civically engaged in their community. Yet without rigorous research, it remains unclear if and how YMPs might lead to these benefits.

Based on the lack of empirical research on YMPs, my theoretical framework, and the research objectives discussed in Chapter One, I used the following research methods: an online questionnaire, content analysis, and interviews. In the next chapter, I describe these methods in detail and provide an overview of my data collection and analysis process.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODS

In the previous chapter I described research related to child- and youth-friendly communities and the planning theories that provide a framework for this study. Since empirical research specifically on YMPs in the United States has not yet been conducted, I chose methods that would enable me to first, **provide an overview of YMPs** and, second, to **determine how well they address youth participation, the physical environment, and diversity/equal representation**. In this chapter I discuss the qualitative and quantitative methods I employed to collect and analyze data and accomplish my research agenda outlined in chapter one. These methods include a **self-administered on-line questionnaire; a content analysis** of the YMP documents; and **phone interviews** with a subset of communities. In the following section, I discuss data collection and analysis together since they were intertwined throughout my research.

Sample Population

For this research I included 41⁴ communities that have created and/or implemented YMPs. This represents the total number of communities I was able to identify in 2009. I found similar documents in other communities. However, after carefully reviewing them I decided that they did not fit my definition of a YMP. As I stated in chapter two, the general components of a “plan” include: information/issues; vision/aims; objectives; strategies; and implementation/actions/recommendations (MacCullum, 2008, p. 328; Healey, 1996, p. 267). Since a YMP should include most or all of these components with the purpose of making a community better for its children and youth, if a document did not include many of these components, I did not include it in my study.

In addition to these components, I considered documents to be YMPs if they also addressed three or more different issues related to child and youth. For example, Nashville, Tennessee has a strategic plan called “Nashville Community Coalition for Youth Safety: Five Year Strategic Plan” from 2007. While this plan includes most of the components of a plan, it only addresses the issue of safety. For this reason I did

⁴ I report a total of 41 communities that have YMPS. 38 communities were sent the questionnaire. However, for three of the communities that completed the questionnaire, I could not obtain a copy of their YMP. Yet, I found 3 additional YMPs after analyzing the questionnaire data to include in the content analysis. Therefore, the total number of plans is 41 (the 38 that included in the questionnaire plus three that I found after finishing the questionnaire), yet I only included 38 in the content analysis since that is the total number of plans I could locate.

not include it in my research since it was narrowly focused on only one aspect of young people's lives.

I also decided that the **youth master plans needed to relate to an entire community** rather than one specific organization in order to be most relevant to community planners. For example, I did not include master plans that guide an organization such as the YMCA to better serve youth. I needed to ensure that the youth master plan documents were similar enough to make my comparison of them meaningful. For example, if one plan focused on a single issue, while another plan focused on ten issues, I anticipated that it would be hard to compare the plans and provide meaningful recommendations.

I identified the communities through websites for the National League of Cities and the California League of Cities and through general Internet searches for YMPs, children and youth strategy plans, and related search terms. In addition, I used a form of snowball sampling to identify additional communities with YMPs. I sent out a different questionnaire to communities with youth councils at approximately the same time (not included in this dissertation), and I included a question about the presence of a YMP in the community. Through this question, I identified eight communities with YMPs.

I was able to download 30 of the master plan documents from the Internet and had to call and email the other 11 communities to get their plan sent to me. However, as I explain later in this chapter, I was only able to obtain a copy of 38 YMPs, rather than 41.

I initially identified a contact person by going to each community's website. If a contact person was not listed, I emailed or called the community to find out the name of the appropriate person to whom I could send the questionnaire. I used these people as the first point of contact for the questionnaire and for the interviews.

Below I describe my specific research methods.

Self-Administered Questionnaire

I created the YMP questionnaire online using [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) to get a general overview of the YMPs. It consisted of 36 items, divided into the following sections:

Section I: Background Information (6 questions)

Section II: Adoption of the YMP (1 question)

Section III: Implementation of the Plan (7 questions)

Section IV: Enforcement of the Plan (2 questions)

Section V: Updating the Plan (2 questions)

Section VI: Content of the Plan (3 questions)

Section VII: Creation Process (2 questions)

Section VIII: Budget (3 questions)

Section IX: Monitoring/Evaluation (1 question)

Section X: Monitoring and Evaluation Process (3 questions)

Section XI: Reflections/Suggestions (5 questions)

Section XII: Thank you (1 question)

The questionnaire includes a variety of question types: yes/no, short answer, rating, multiple choice, and open-ended. Appendix A contains a complete copy of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire employed skip logic that allowed a respondent to answer “no” to a question and then automatically skip to the next relevant section. For example, Section IX: Monitoring/Evaluation only contains one question, “Do you currently monitor/evaluate your YMP?” with three answer options, “Yes”, “No”, and “We haven’t yet, but plan to in the future.” If a respondent answered either “No” or “We haven’t yet”, she would automatically skip the following section “Monitoring and Evaluation Process”. Using skip logic allows each questionnaire to be customized and shortened according to the relevant information each respondent can provide.

However, one limitation of the SurveyMonkey™ system is that a question using skip logic must occur at the end of a section. This sometimes forced me to limit the number of questions on a particular focus area or to have sections with only one question.

I emailed the questionnaire to 38 communities that I thought had YMPs. Three communities: Columbus, Georgia; East Brunswick, New Jersey; and Vashon Island, Washington, completed the questionnaire, however after repeated attempts, I was not able to obtain a copy of their YMP. While I did not include these three YMPs in the content analysis and it is possible that the three plans would not meet my criteria for inclusion, I did include their responses in the summary of the questionnaire results. See Table 3.1 for the list of communities that I included in each method.

Table 3.1: Complete list of communities and data sources

ID	State	Community	Questionnaire	Content Analysis	Interview
1	CA	Albany		X	
2	CA	Arcadia		X	
3	CA	Claremont	X	X	
4	CA	Diamond Bar	X	X	
5	CA	Indio		X	
6	CA	La Canada Flintridge	X	X	
7	CA	North Fair Oaks	X	X	
8	CA	Oakley	X	X	
9	CA	Palo Alto	X	X	X
10	CA	Pleasanton	X	X	
11	CA	Pomona	X	X	
12	CA	San Jose	X	X	

Table 3.1 Con't

ID	State	Community	Questionnaire	Content Analysis	Interview
13	CA	Santa Ana	X	X	
14	CA	Santa Clarita		X	X
15	CA	Sierra Madre		X	
16	CA	Temecula	X	X	
17	CA	Thousand Oaks	X	X	
18	CA	Vacaville	X	X	
19	CO	Brighton	X	X	X
20	CO	La Plata County	X	X	
21	CO	El Paso County		X	
22	CT	Manchester	X	X	
23	FL	Broward County	X	X	
24	GA	Chatham County		X	
25	GA	Columbus	X		
26	MI	Grand Rapids	X	X	
27	MN	Olmsted County		X	
28	NE	Omaha		X	
29	NJ	East Brunswick	X		
30	NM	Santa Fe	X	X	X
31	OH	Lakewood	X	X	
32	OR	Portland/Multnomah County	X	X	
33	SC	Charleston	X	X	
34	VA	Chesapeake	X	X	
35	VA	Hampton	X	X	
36	VA	James City County	X	X	
37	VA	Newport News	X	X	
38	VA	Roanoke		X	
39	VA	Virginia Beach		X	
40	WA	Vashon Island	X		
41	WI	Ho-Chunk Nation		X	
Total			29	38	4

The communities include cities and counties. Although, some states have YMPs, I did not include them due to drastic differences in scale and governmental structure between a state and city.

I followed best practices when administering the questionnaire by sending out an initial query, followed by two reminder emails and in some cases a follow-up phone call (Babbie, 1998). I completed a pre-test of the questionnaire, obtaining comments from faculty and local planners familiar with youth issues, and piloted the questionnaire in five communities with YMPs. Based on the pre-test and the pilot, I made minor changes to the questionnaire such as changing wording and adding additional answer categories to certain questions. Since the number of potential respondents was small and differences between the piloted version and the final version were minor, I included the pilot data in the analysis. As respondents completed the questionnaire, they were checked off the contact list and did not receive additional email reminders. After all of my attempts, 29 communities completed the questionnaire out of a possible 38, bringing my response rate to 76%.

After cleaning and organizing the data, I generated a report of descriptive statistics that included all of the questions and responses with percentages. I sent this summary report to all of the respondents who indicated they would like a copy of the results. However, for this report, I did not categorize the open-ended questions due to the amount of time it would take to prepare and the need to get initial results to the respondents quickly.

In order to create a complete picture of the YMPs, I imported the open-ended questions into NVivo Content Analysis Software and coded them. In content analysis, coding refers to the process of identifying and marking passages in the data and is referred to as one of the “central activities in qualitative research” (Gibbs, 2002, p. 57). I coded each question separately rather than look for general themes among all the questions⁵. I conducted a complete content analysis and then re-evaluated the nodes a second time three-weeks later in order to collapse nodes or re-code answers where appropriate.

Validity shows a correlation between the category and the abstract concept that it represents. Determining the validity of classification or coding scheme is important to show the generalizability of my findings (Weber, 1985, p. 18). For the purpose of determining validity of my coding decisions, a PhD candidate in the School of Education, Emily Wexler Love, double-coded responses to three of the questions:

1. What is/was the biggest challenge or barrier in the implementation of your youth master plan?
2. What is the most significant thing that has happened as a result of your youth master plan? Please be specific and provide an example.

⁵ In NVivo, the terms “node” and “code” are used interchangeably in the noun form as a category created to organize the data. However, for the purposes of clarity, I will use the term code only in the verb form and use the term node to describe my categories.

3. What recommendations do you have for other communities just beginning the process of creating a youth master plan? Please be specific and provide an example.

Based on the list of nodes I created through my initial coding process, I trained Emily to understand my nodes and the process I used. Once trained, Emily coded one question first and then we discussed the codes in detail to determine how each of us interpreted the responses. Based on this conversation, I altered a few of the nodes and created a final list. Then Emily coded the other two questions using the altered coding system.

Once we had both coded the same three questions, I ran a coding comparison query in NVivo to determine our inter-coder agreement. I calculated our percent Kappa Coefficient and percent agreement. Since the Kappa Coefficient represents the percent agreement taking into consideration any chance agreement, it was an appropriate measure of validity. Our double coding process resulted in a Kappa Coefficient of 0.94, a percent agreement of 99.5% and a percent disagreement of 0.47%.

With these numbers, I felt confident of the inter-coder agreement and validity of the nodes and finished coding the open-ended questions. I then manually imported that

information into an excel spreadsheet. For most questions, I double-coded answers since they fit into more than one category. To deal with this, I created a column for each possible answer and then indicated yes or no (using 1 and 0 respectively) as to whether the respondent's answer fell into specific categories. I then imported the information into PASW 18 statistics software (formerly SPSS). I first determined frequencies for each response and then ran cross-tabulations to analyze the relationship between different variables. Chapter four presents the results of this analysis.

Artifact Collection and Content Analysis

Since the questionnaires and the phone interviews rely on key informants in each community to remember and understand all of the specifics of the master planning process and the content of the final YMP, I also examine artifacts from each community to supplement the responses given by individuals. Artifacts are enduring physical representations of a process, yet, they can be reread in different contexts and given completely different meanings depending on the audience (Hodder, 1998, p. 111). Plans, as artifacts, can be considered the product created through a process of interaction between multiple parties and can be used as a point of reference for future interactions and decisions. Further, the analysis of plans can help determine the “story line” for each community (Healy, 1996, p. 282).

The final YMP documents themselves represent the most predominant, and potentially, the most significant of the various possible artifacts to include. Although other artifacts such as draft versions, youth council information, and survey results were available from some communities, I chose to use only the YMP documents to be consistent with my analysis for each community.

Content analysis can be used to determine several characteristics of text, including the cultural patterns expressed and the focus of a group or society (Weber, 1985, p.9). For example, in the context of youth initiatives, one could determine whether the community had an asset-based or deficit-based approach by analyzing the specific language used to describe the initiative. I compiled 38 YMP documents for content analysis⁶. Although the number of YMPs I evaluated through content analysis is the same as the sample size used for the questionnaire, they do not represent the same exact plans. As mentioned above, the three communities for which I could not obtain YMPs were replaced by three plans from Indio, CA, Chatham County, GA, and Roanoke, VA that I found after the questionnaire had already been completed. Although these communities were not included in the questionnaire, I decided to include them in the content analysis since they could provide valuable data and

⁶ Prior to beginning the content analysis component of this research in June 2010, I did a search on the Internet for additional YMPs. However, after completing the content analysis process, I found that one community had completed recent updates of their master plan that were available on-line. In the interest of time and with the understanding that communities are creating and updating their master plans concurrent with my research process, I did not include the updated version in my research.

potentially be included in the interviews. Figure 3.1 contains the complete list of YMPs.

I established my initial list of tree nodes (tree nodes are codes that contain a hierarchy and have sub nodes within them) based on the three focus areas described in Chapter Two: youth participation; the physical environment; and diversity/equal representation. Within each of these categories, I used the “code and retrieve” process, through which I coded five initial YMPs in order to develop my list of sub-nodes (referred to as child-nodes in NVivo) and look for similar themes across the YMPs (Richards & Richards, 1998, p. 214).

My coding process during the content analysis involved both an inductive and deductive approach using NVivo. I used a deductive process to determine if my three focus areas were addressed in the master plan documents. For example, I created the three tree nodes for my focus areas prior to coding any of the documents. During the process of coding, I was able to determine if each plan included passages that fit into those nodes.

In addition, I conducted multiple word search queries in NVivo, using terms such as diversity, participation, youth voice, space, and environment that reflect the ideas in my three focus areas. The word search queries, combined with other analysis,

provided me with a good overview of how each plan addressed the three areas. In addition, since some of the YMPs are extensive, this was one way to help prevent missing key examples in the text (Gibbs, 2002, p. 107).

In order to develop the specific sub-nodes and determine examples of how the YMPs address my three focus areas, I followed an inductive approach and developed additional nodes as I read through the documents and pulled out different ideas or themes. For example, I include transportation as a sub-node in the physical environment tree node. However, I did not create this sub-node until I read a plan that included a specific reference to transportation. Therefore, during the process I continuously adjusted the list of sub-nodes, either adding additional ones or adjusting what they represented.

Since nodes are not simply a categorization of the text but should form the focus of interpretation (Gibbs, 2002, p. 60), I chose five random master plans to pilot my analysis process. I coded these plans multiple times in order to determine a satisfactory list of nodes that were distinct without being too detailed or specific. I specifically tried to limit the number of nodes to a manageable amount to ensure that I identified multiple examples of most nodes across different master plans. In order to maintain the context of the nodes, I kept my coded passages to complete sentences or paragraphs (Gibbs, 2002, p. 66).

While I do not presume that my research is objective since it is based on my judgment as well as normative beliefs from the literature of what is important, I aimed for objectivity by following the recommended rules and procedures throughout the content analysis process (Holsti, 1969, p. 3). To test the validity of my coding scheme I determined whether another researcher, following the same rules and procedures would come to the same conclusions.

Emily Wexler Love, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education, double-coded three YMP documents. She first coded one plan using my coding scheme. We then reviewed both of our codes to look for discrepancies. Through this process, I was able to collapse a few nodes and move others. For example, initially I created a node called “Creative Expression through the Arts” in the “Diversity” tree node, since one master plan used the arts to express diversity in the community. However, other master plans focused on the idea of public art without a connection to diversity. During discussions with Emily, I decided this sub-node should be under the “Physical Environment” tree node instead, since it has more to do with creating art to change the physical appearance of the community. Although I could have double coded this passage and create a sub-node within two of my tree nodes, it made more sense to simplify the number of nodes while making a note that in some cases public art was also used to expression cultural diversity.

As we began the double-coding process I discovered the following issues:

- The master plans have varying formats and it was hard to remain constant with the exact text that was coded. For example, I first coded just an initial goal that was listed, whereas Emily also coded all the subheadings under that initial goal.
- Some of the YMPs include many appendices that are not part of the actual master plan text. For example, sometimes these appendices include information about the creation process for the master plan such as city council meeting minutes. While these are relevant, not every YMP included these types of documents making it hard to compare the YMPs to each other.
- Initially, I chose not to include an un-coded data category. However, the first coding comparison query that I ran included significant amounts of un-coded data in the agreement calculation, which seemed to skew the agreement calculations.
- Due to limitations in the NVivo software, we found it difficult to view the common codes on one screen, making it difficult to discuss our coding strategies.

Based on these initial issues, I developed a detailed list of “rules” that we both followed during the double-coding process (see Appendix B). Using this process, I

developed the final list of nodes shown in Figure 3.1. These nodes reflect general themes or ideas rather than individual words since I chose to use themes as my unit to be classified (Weber, 1985, p.22). The list is broken down into the three general thematic categories that align with my focus areas: participation; diversity/equal representation; and physical environment. In addition, I identified other themes not directly related to my research agenda. Rather than put them all into one miscellaneous node, I broke them out into thematic ideas without sub-nodes.

- **Physical Environment**
 - Place attachment and community connection
 - Public art
 - Natural environment
 - Safety
 - Transportation
 - Spaces to be used by children and youth
- **Diversity and Equal Representation**
 - Accessibility
 - Awareness and inclusion of diverse populations
 - Focus on ALL youth
 - Intergenerational work
 - Low-cost options and financial support
 - Recognition of faith-based organizations
 - Bilingual resources
- **Youth Participation**
 - Recreation and social activities
 - Volunteering and community service
 - Youth/student council
 - Youth conducting research or evaluation
 - Development of leadership skills
 - Youth participation in media
 - Youth participation in creating the YMP
 - Youth participation in community decision-making
 - Employment and career preparation

- Training or programs for adults
- Information dissemination about community resources
- Coordination and collaboration between entities
- Background research and information for the YMP
- YMP creation process
- Monitoring and Evaluation of the YMP
- Child and Youth Development
- Health
- Education
- Non-Coded

Figure 3.1: Final List of Tree Nodes Used in Content Analysis

In addition, throughout my content analysis process, I created detailed notes to keep track of my thoughts and ideas about the data. Sometimes I aligned these memos with specific passages and used them in the presentation of findings in chapters four, five, six and seven.

The entire content analysis process turned out to be more complicated and time-consuming than I had originally intended. I analyzed approximately 1,400 pages between all 38 of the YMPs. In addition, it was difficult to determine exactly what to include in each node. For example, many plans include a description of the initiatives or programs already present in the specific community. Although I am more interested in the efforts each plan promotes for the future, existing programs can also make important contributions to the desired outcomes for the community. Because of

the vast amounts of data I was already collecting through the content analysis process, I decided to code any information about existing programs in the background research and information node but also double code it if it was particularly relevant to my three focus areas, youth participation, physical environment, and diversity/equal representation.

In addition, many plans repeat ideas or goals throughout the entire document. For example, many include an executive summary in the beginning of the plan that outlines the main goals or objectives of the plan, often including a description of each focus area or issue that the plan addressed. These ideas would often be repeated later in the plan with a more detailed description. In order to avoid missing any relevant or important information, I chose to code the text each time, assuming that I was going to use the analysis to obtain more qualitative than quantitative results. However, this also meant that when I ran a query to see all the coded passages under a sub-node, there could be duplicate passages present.

I also experienced technical complications using NVivo. The NVivo version 8 is the first version to accept pdf files. Although I collected the plans in pdf or Microsoft Word format in order to easily use them in NVivo, in a few cases, the pdfs were created from a scanned image and therefore could not be coded in NVivo. To deal with this, I obtained character recognition software to convert the pdf documents to

text documents. Although this process often created poorly formatted documents, I was able to work with the text that was produced in order to proceed with the coding process. In addition, many of the original pdf documents were extremely large in file size due to the length and number of photos. In order to import any file over 3 mgs I had to reduce it in size, and in some cases split the YMP into multiple documents.

Using Microsoft Excel, I recorded document attributes or metadata for each YMP that I determined either by reading the plan or from the US Census website (<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/>). The document attributes include:

- Community name;
- State;
- Plan name;
- Date of adoption;
- Population size;
- Percent of population that is white (to give an indication of racial diversity);
- Per capita income;
- Median family income;
- Percent of population under 18;
- Age groups targeted in plan;
- Youth input into the creation of the master plan;

- If the plan uses any of the following frameworks or models: Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, Communities that Care, National League of Cities 7 Key Action Areas, Ready by 21, America's Promise Alliance, Network for Youth – Community Youth;
- Use of an outside consultant during the creation process;
- If the plan is available on the internet; and
- If the plan addresses my three focus areas at all.

Most of these attributes are presented in Chapter Four. I completed the attribute chart and then chose several of the most salient attributes in order to determine which communities to interview. This includes a breakdown of the plans that best address the physical environment, youth participation, and diversity/equal representation. I describe this in the following section.

Phone Interviews

In order to more thoroughly evaluate the creation process and outcomes, I conducted phone interviews with a selection of communities⁷. The choice of which communities to interview was a difficult one. Initially, I skimmed each master plan to determine

⁷ Before conducting the interviews, I applied for and received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the University of Colorado Denver Human Subject Research Committee (HSRC). The committee granted me an expedited review due to the non-sensitive nature of my research. I received approval on July 23, 2010. The COMIRB protocol number is 10-0663 and my initial approval expires on July 23, 2011.

how much, if at all, they addressed my three focus areas. I kept track of this and also took notes as to whether or not they might make interesting communities to interview.

In addition, once I completed the content analysis of all the YMPs in NVivo, I evaluated the *main* sub-node in each of the three focus area tree nodes. For example, in the youth participation tree node, I had eight sub-nodes that included different types of participation such as youth councils or boards, youth conducting research or evaluation, and youth participation in volunteer activities. However, I considered the main sub-node in youth participation to be youth participation in decision-making and civic engagement. Although many paragraphs or sentences in the YMPs were double-coded, the decision-making node seemed to be the most general of all the participation sub-nodes and also included a high number of references (YMPs with phrases coded in that node). I created a chart shown in Figure 3.2 to display the frequencies as a percentage of coverage for this node relative to the rest of the document. For example, Portland/Multnomah County, Oregon has the highest percentage of coverage at 12.15%. This means that I coded 12.15% of the text in the Portland/Multnomah County plan into the “youth participation in decision-making” sub-node.

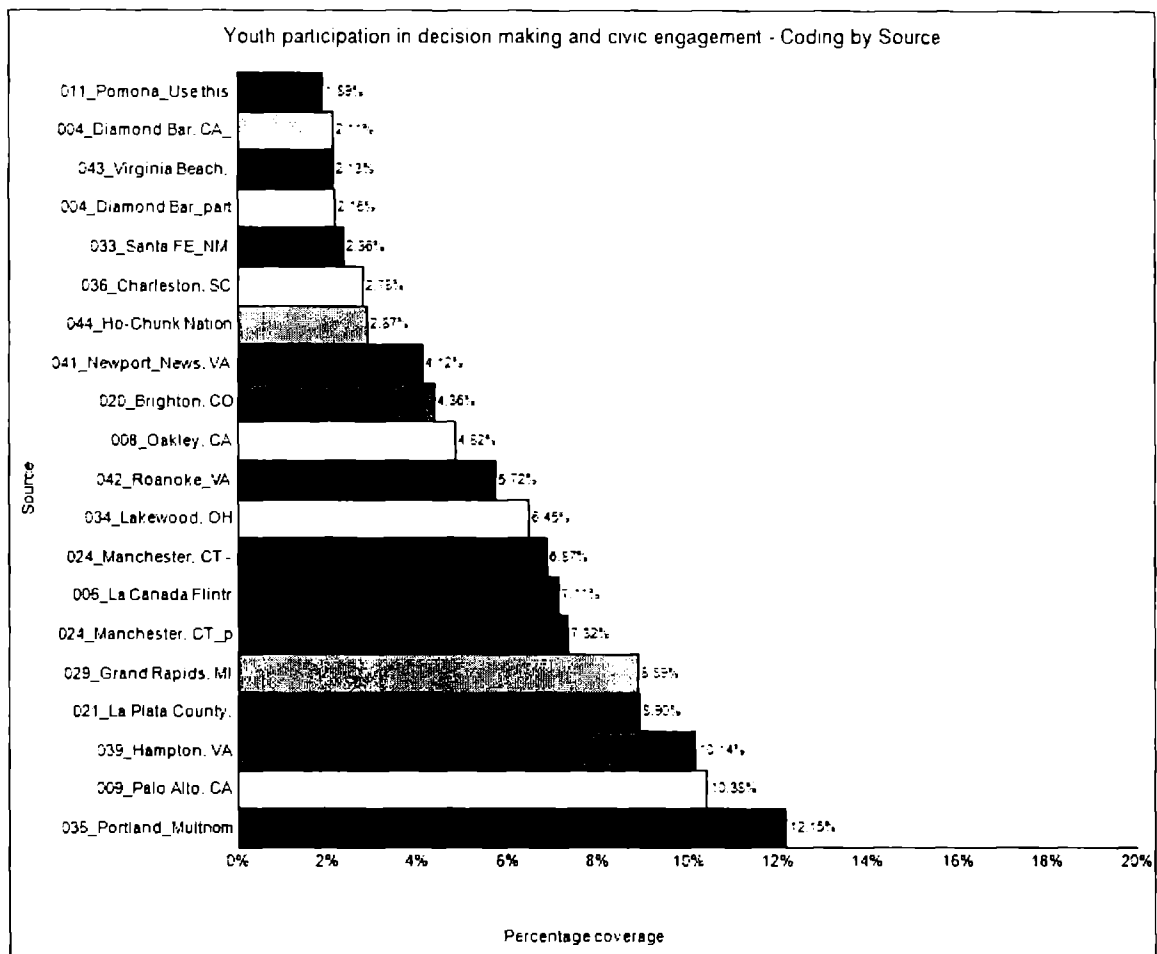


Figure 3.2: YMPs by Coverage of Youth Participation in Decision-Making

While this chart is helpful, the percent coverage can only be used as a basic guide when comparing different plans because they are all different lengths. For example, Palo Alto, CA, second on the list with 10.38% coverage, may actually contain more information considered relevant to this sub-node than Portland's plan. But if the document is longer than Portland's plan, the percentage of coverage is smaller.

However, when combined with my own initial read of each plan, this chart became a good check to ensure that I identified all the plans that covered youth participation and could be potential interview candidates. I did this same process with physical environment and diversity/equal representation, shown in Figure 3.3 and figure 3.4 below.

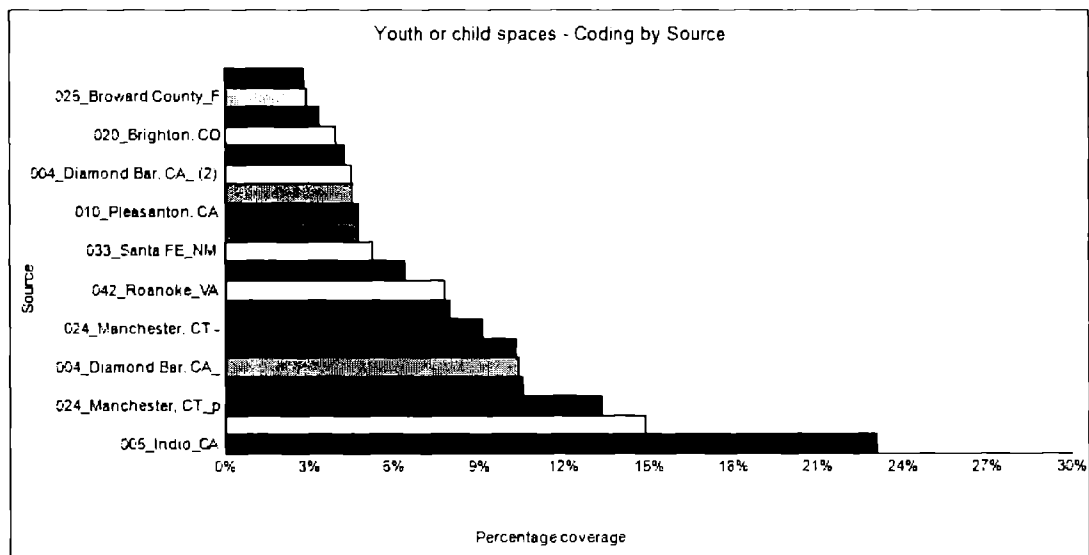


Figure 3.3: YMPs by Coverage of “Child or Youth Spaces”

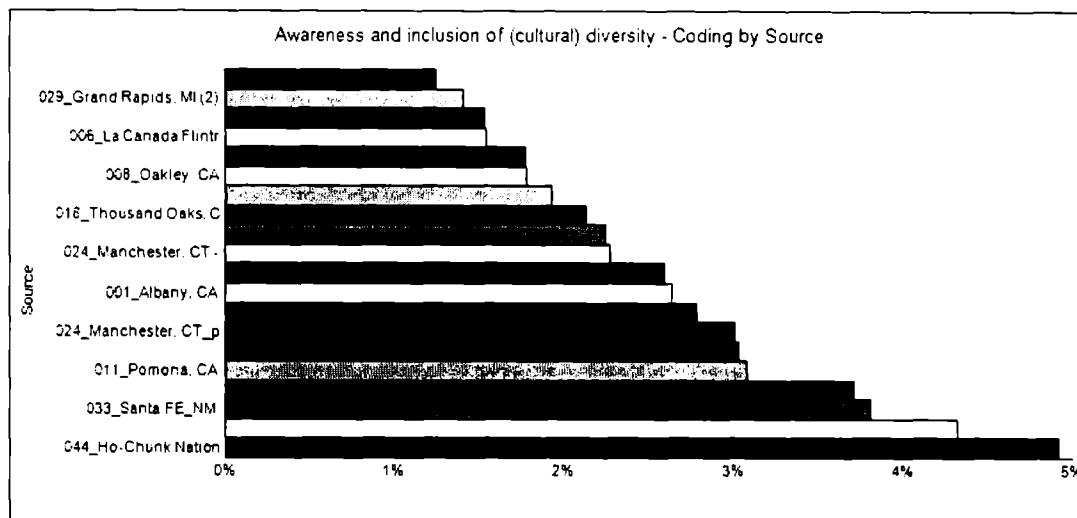


Figure 3.4: YMPs by Coverage of “Awareness and Inclusion of Cultural Diversity”

With this information, I created an attribute chart to determine which communities to interview (see table 3.2). I also included other attributes, including the state in which the community was located, the total population, the median family income, whether the community hired a consultant or not, and if they used the Search Institute asset development framework. In addition, I ensured that the YMP had been adopted two or more years earlier to be more likely to show outcomes.

I used the chart to choose three communities that varied on as many attributes as possible, while still focusing on those communities that best addressed my three focus areas. I also made sure that not all of the communities were located in California and that at least one of the communities did not address all of the three focus areas.

Although, I could have controlled for various characteristics such as size, I instead chose communities that were different from each other to gain a broad understanding of YMPs. I ran cross-tabulations between community characteristics such as population size with other significant questionnaire data, such as outcome, and did not find many significant associations. In addition, I wanted to understand the YMPs in different communities rather than those with a specific characteristic, such as large populations since that would limit my findings.

I also wanted to choose communities that were not extreme examples or that used a completely different format for their YMP. For example, Hampton, VA and Portland/Multnomah County, OR are two communities well known for their youth engagement work. Yet, both have created plans that are not typical YMPs. Portland/Multnomah County's is actually a report to city council about a document titled "Bill of Rights for the Children and Youth of the City of Portland and Multnomah County." Although this is a different format than all of the other YMPs, it appears that it serves a similar purpose so I chose to include it in this research. The City of Hampton also uses a slightly different format for its plan, having created a youth component of the community-wide comprehensive plan.

Although these two examples displayed relatively high frequencies of at least one of my three focus areas, I decided not to choose them since they were different from the

typical YMP. However, these examples are included in a more general discussion of the different ways YMPs address my three focus areas described in chapters five, six, and seven. See Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Attribute chart to determine interview communities

Community Name	Population	Median family income	Consultant Hired	Search Institute Framework	Physical Environment	Youth Participation	Diversity/ Equal Representation
Top Communities Addressing Physical Environment							
Santa Clarita, CA	178,062	82,386	no	no		yes	yes
Diamond Bar, CA	57,248	101,213	yes	yes		yes	no
Sierra Madre, CA	10,578	79,588	no	yes		yes	no
Temecula, CA	44,950	79,042	yes	yes		no	no
Olmsted County, MN	139,191	79,912	yes	yes		yes	no
Santa Fe, NM	64,040	58,064	yes	yes		yes	yes
Indio, CA	69,961	56,105	no	no		no	no
Top Communities Addressing Youth Participation							
Santa Clarita, CA	178,062	82,386	no	no	yes		yes
Sierra Madre, CA	10,578	79,588	no	yes	yes		no
Grand Rapids, MI	91,952	45,938	no	yes	no		yes
Palo Alto, CA	63,370	117,574	no	yes	no		no
Santa Fe, NM	64,040	58,064	yes	yes	yes		yes
La Plata County, CO	49,594	50,814	yes	yes	no		no
Roanoke, VA	92,679	47,358	yes	yes	yes		no
Manchester, CT	55,211	76,208	yes	yes	yes		yes
Hampton, VA	146,154	57,037	yes	yes	yes		no
Portland & Multnomah Co, OR	699,482	57,952	no	no	yes		no

Table 3.2 Con't.

Community Name	Population	Median family income	Consultant Hired	Search Institute Framework	Physical Environment	Youth Participation	Diversity/ Equal Representation
Top Communities Addressing Diversity/Equal Representation							
Santa Clarita, CA	178,062	82,386	no	no	yes	yes	
Grand Rapids, MI	91,952	45,938	no	yes	no	yes	
Santa Fe, NM	64,040	58,064	yes	yes	yes	yes	
Virginia Beach, VA	435,553	73,874	no	yes	no	yes	
Albany, CA	16,444	64,269	no	no	yes	yes	

The three communities listed in bold italics in Table 3.2, Santa Clarita, CA, Palo Alto, CA, and Santa Fe, NM, are those with which I conducted interviews. Once I had the three communities chosen, I sent each of the identified contact people an initial email to describe my research and ask if they would be willing to do a phone interview. This person was often the same person who completed the questionnaire. If they agreed, I explained the consent form and coordinated a way to get it to them via email or fax. I scheduled the interview with them for a later date and asked that they return the consent form to me prior to the scheduled interview.

During the interview I asked each interviewee if they could suggest other people, both adults and youth in the community, who were familiar with the YMP, had participated in the creation process in some way, and might be willing to do an

interview. This form of snowball sampling allowed me to get the names of at least two other potential interviewees for each community. However, I was only able to get the names of youth in two of the communities. For one community, I was told that youth would not be familiar with the YMP in order to answer questions. And in another community, the initial contact person did not want to give out youth names. Although he asked youth himself if they would be willing to do an interview, I did not receive any names. In addition, one of the youth with whom I scheduled an interview was not available at the scheduled time and did not respond to my follow-up phone calls.

I conducted phone interviews with the following people:

- Youth Resource Coordinator Assistant - Brighton, CO
- Former high-school youth council member and current young adult youth council member – Brighton, CO
- Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director – Santa Clarita, CA
- Staff member in Community Services Division (currently Management Analyst in Division of Public Works) – Santa Clarita, CA
- Recreation Supervisor that oversees youth and teen programs– Palo Alto, CA
- Director of the Children and Youth Commission – Santa Fe, NM
- Business management/strategic planning consultant who wrote the youth master plan – Santa Fe, NM

In order to avoid phone charges, I called using my laptop and the Gmail phone call program. This also made it easy to get an accurate record of each interview by recording them through my computer using Audacity™, a free audio recording software. I transcribed the interviews shortly after conducting them using ExpressScribe.

At the scheduled date and time, I phoned the interviewee using Gmail. During the interview, I assumed a “neutral role” in order to appear friendly. I engaged in “interested listening” while at the same time I avoided evaluating or influencing the responses in any way during the interview (Fontana & Frey, 1998, p. 52). In addition, I sent the youth interviewee a \$10 Target gift card for participating. Each interview lasted between 30 minutes and one hour.

The interview protocol is semi-structured in nature and includes predominately open-ended questions to clarify answers given in the questionnaire, provide additional information related to specific elements of their YMP document, and gather more data as appropriate. See Appendix C for the full copy of the basic interview protocol.

I altered the protocol slightly to suit the appropriate participant and added community specific questions to some interviews based on the background information I had

already gathered. In addition, I re-read the appropriate YMP prior to the interviews for each community.

Before interviewing the three chosen communities (Santa Clarita, CA, Palo Alto, CA, and Santa Fe, NM) I piloted the interview process by conducting two interviews with individuals from Brighton, Colorado. I conducted these using the same process described above. Piloting the interviews with one adult and one college student who was a high-school student during the *Brighton Children, Youth and Families Master Plan* creation, was extremely helpful to try out the technology and identify issues with the interview questions. Based on the results of the pilot, I altered the interview protocol slightly to include more direct questions about the three focus areas. In the pilot I included one general question for each, but found that it was not enough to get a through understanding of what that focus area meant to the community and how the plan was written to address it, if at all.

With the addition of the two pilot interviews, I conducted a total of seven interviews. I imported the transcripts for each of these into NVivo and analyzed the interviews using a process that was slightly different than the coding process I used with the open-ended responses from the questionnaire. Rather than have each question as a tree node, I decided upon nine general thematic nodes that I identified in the interviews. Some of these I determined prior to my coding process, and I created a

few of them as I read through each plan and began coding. Table 3.3 includes the list of nodes I created to analyze the interview transcripts.

Table 3.3: Final list of nodes used for interview transcripts

1. Youth participation
2. Who is using the plan
3. Physical environment
4. Outcomes
5. Diversity
6. Consultants
7. Collaboration and coordination
8. Details of the creation process
9. Recommended changes to plans

Conclusion

The methods I used were complementary and enabled me to obtain a variety of data about the creation process, content, and outcomes for YMPs. Using the seven interview transcripts, the questionnaire responses from 29 communities, and the content analysis of 38 YMP documents, I was able to accomplish my goals and create an overview of YMPs in the United States (chapter 4). In addition, I describe how YMPs address youth participation (chapter 5), the physical environment (chapter 6), and diversity and equal representation (chapter 7).

CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS: GENERAL OVERVIEW OF YOUTH MASTER PLANS

Using the three methods outlined in the previous chapter: 1) a self-administered online questionnaire; 2) the collection and content analysis of YMP documents; and 3) phone interviews with staff/consultant/youth council member in four communities; I was able to develop a general overview of YMPs. I divide this overview into the following sections: community context and demographics; plan status; plan components; creation process; focus areas; target population; implementation; training; funding; monitoring and evaluation; use of consultants; outcomes; and recommendations and lessons learned.

Community Context and Demographics

The YMPs I include in this study represent both cities and counties⁸. They are from communities in 16 different states, with multiple plans from California (18 plans), Virginia (6 plans), Colorado (3 plans), and Georgia (2 plans). These communities are

⁸ Although I identified a few YMPs created for entire states, I decided not to include them because of the difference in size and governance structure between a city and a state.

of varying population size, ranging from 10,578 to 1,754,846 according to the 2006 American Community Census Estimate (U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, n.d.). Clustering the communities by population, 23% (9 out of 40⁹) of the communities have fewer than 50,000 people; 33% (13 out of 40) have between 50,000 and 100,000 people; 25% (10 out of 40) have between 100,001 and 200,000 and just 20% (8 out of 40) have above 200,000 people (see figure 4.1).

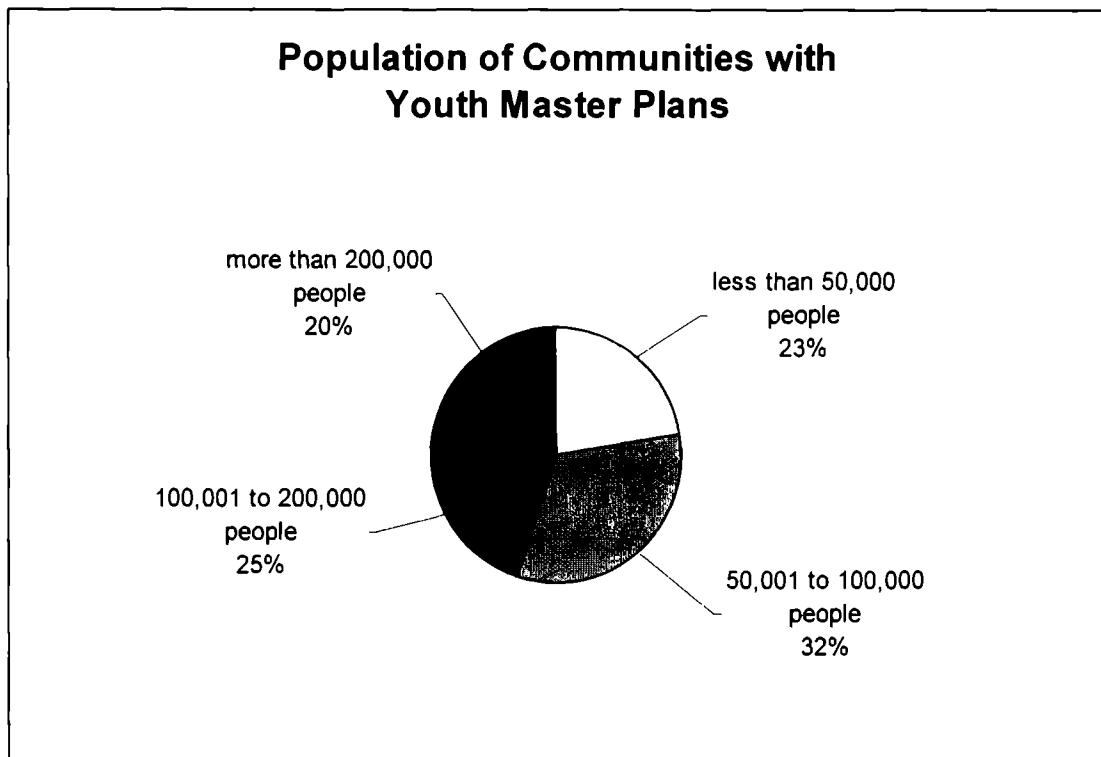


Figure 4.1: Population of Communities with YMPs (N=40)

⁹ The calculations are out of 40 total communities rather than 41 because there was no census population data on the Ho-Chunk Nation, which has a YMP.

From the questionnaire data, I determined that four different department or agency types house the YMPs (n=30). The highest number of YMPs (30%) are located within a department focused on children, youth and families. Although each department is different depending on the community context, a typical department of this type coordinates the programs and services focused on the wellbeing of young people and their families. The other three department types are equally represented with 23% and include: parks and recreation departments, which typically oversee the programming and use of parks and recreation facilities; human services departments, which typically oversee social services for all members of the community including programs focused on mental health, welfare, and disabilities; and finally, administrative departments, which include those associated with a city manager, city council, mayor, or other administrative entity.

Evaluating the demographics of the communities with YMPs shows most of the communities with YMPs are generally more affluent than the national average. For example, 34 out of the 40 communities have a higher per capita income than the national per capita income of \$21,587. The per capita income for the 40 communities ranges from \$14,881 in Pomona, CA to \$56,257 in Palo Alto, CA, with an average of \$29,586. Similarly, 35 out of 40 communities with YMPs have a median family income higher than the national median family income, which is \$50,046. For the communities with YMPs, this number ranges from \$41,288 in Columbus, GA to

\$122,779 in La Canada Flintridge, CA, and averages \$71,332. Table 4.1 lists per capita income and median family income for all communities.

Just over half of the communities with YMPs (23 out of 40) have a slightly higher percentage of its population under 18 than the national average at 25.7%. Although the range for communities with YMPs is from 18% to 35.6%, the average is 26.2%, basically matching the national average. This indicates that communities with YMPs do not necessarily have more young people than other communities without YMPs. Table 4.1 lists the percentage of people under 18 for all communities.

The average percent of the population who identify as white (alone or in conjunction with another racial category) is slightly lower for the communities with YMPs at 70.4%, than the national average of 77.1%. I used this figure to indicate diversity in the communities, assuming that a lower percentage of the white population suggests a higher relative diversity in general. Based on this, 27 out of 40 communities that have YMPs are more diverse than the US population as a whole. The percentage of people who identify as white ranges from 35.8% in Arcadia, CA to 96.1% in Vashon Island, WA. Table 4.1 lists this demographic information for each community with a YMP.

Table 4.1: Demographic information for communities with YMPs¹⁰ (N=40)

ID	Community	Population	% white	per capita income	median family income	% of pop. under 18
1	Albany, CA	16,444	66.3%	28,494	64,269	22.9%
2	Arcadia, CA	57,744	35.6%	28,400	66,657	23.3%
3	Claremont, CA	34,933	76.8%	39,648	102,138	20.7%
4	Diamond Bar, CA	57,248	38.6%	34,569	101,213	27.0%
5	Indio, CA	69,961	61.2%	22,350	56,105	35.3%
6	La Canada Flintridge, CA	20,773	73.5%	52,838	122,779	29.2%
7	North Fair Oaks, CA	17,346	72.1%	24,107	45,569	28.0%
8	Oakley, CA	31,130	69.0%	26,084	79,038	35.5%
9	Palo Alto, CA	63,370	70.9%	56,257	117,574	21.2%
10	Pleasanton, CA	70,700	72.3%	43,303	117,898	28.2%
11	Pomona, CA	150,759	43.4%	14,881	46,544	35.6%
12	San Jose, CA	905,180	51.5%	30,794	83,089	26.4%
13	Santa Ana, CA	327,681	49.2%	29,150	76,092	34.2%
14	Santa Clarita, CA	178,062	76.3%	29,350	82,386	30.3%
15	Sierra Madre, CA	10,578	89.4%	41,104	79,588	25.7%
16	Temecula, CA	44,950	74.7%	28,176	79,042	34.7%
17	Thousand Oaks, CA	124,831	83.9%	40,411	102,824	26.0%
18	Vacaville, CA	91,287	72.6%	26,096	71,484	26.0%
19	Brighton, CO	30,719	76.5%	17,927	53,286	28.6%
20	La Plata County, CO	49,594	89.2%	19,352	50,814	22.7%
21	El Paso County, CO	587,353	84.7%	26,273	64,888	27.6%
22	Manchester, CT	55,211	75.8%	32,845	76,208	20.8%
23	Broward County, FL	1,754,846	67.8%	23,170	41,691	23.6%
24	Chatham County, GA	247,833	56.2%	25,620	55,473	25.4%
25	Columbus, GA	185,781	51.6%	18,276	41,288	26.8%
26	Grand Rapids, MI	193,242	68.0%	20,196	46,779	24.8%
27	Olmsted County, MN	139,191	90.4%	33,151	79,912	27.0%
28	Omaha, NE	388,977	78.8%	23,759	55,953	25.7%
29	East Brunswick, NJ	46,756	79.4%	33,286	86,863	26.0%
30	Santa Fe, NM	64,040	81.9%	30,776	58,064	18.0%
31	Lakewood, OH	54,210	92.9%	23,945	53,433	21.0%
32	Portland, Multnomah County, OR	699,482	82.8%	27,429	57,952	22.3%
33	Charleston, SC	111,980	67.6%	29,338	60,858	21.1%

¹⁰ This table includes demographic information for all of the communities that are included either in the questionnaire or content analysis data, except the Ho Chunk Nation.

Table 4.1 Con't.

ID	Community	Population	% white	per capita income	median family income	% of pop. under 18
34	Chesapeake, VA	106,319	65.7%	20,949	56,302	28.8%
35	Hampton, VA	146,154	48.3%	23,293	57,037	23.0%
36	James City County, VA	60,997	81.9%	38,032	80,728	20.5%
37	Newport News, VA	180,745	53.0%	22,257	53,631	28.0%
38	Roanoke, VA	92,679	70.8%	22,757	47,358	22.6%
39	Virginia Beach, VA	435,553	73.0%	30,757	73,874	26.4%
40	Vashon Island, WA	10,123	96.1%	31,983	67,010	23.2%
41	Ho Chunk Nation					
Community Average		196,743	70.41%	2\$9,586	\$71,332	26.2%
National Average			77.10%	\$21,587	\$50,046	25.7%

Plan Status

In general, YMPs are a fairly new type of plan, with the earliest created in 1990. Overall, 27.6% of communities started the creation process in the 1990s and 72.4% were started in the year 2000 or later (n=29). The average time between the start of the creation process and adoption of the YMP is two years. Some communities adopted the plan during the same year it was started and others took as many as four years to go through the process. The specific year of adoption ranges from 1993 to 2009, with 18% being adopted in the 1990s and 82% being adopted in the 2000s (n=22). For 95% of the communities, the adoption process includes approval by city council, county commission or other similar entity. Two communities (10%) sought approval from the school board and one community also sought approval from the

parks and recreation department in addition to the city council or governing body.

Only one community sought approval from their youth council as part of their adoption process. This fact highlights the lack of political power that youth possess in a community governance structure. However, since most of the plans endorse meaningful youth participation, not seeking the approval of a youth council suggests a failure to reinforce rhetoric with action.

The majority of the communities, 79%, (n=29) have adopted their YMP as of 2009, although the specific status varies from the data collection phase to revisions of the original plan. More than half, 67%, have a final adopted plan they are implementing. Additionally, 17% are currently revising their plan; 7% have a final adopted plan but are not doing anything with it right now; 3% are in the data collection/indicator phase; 3% have a final first draft that is not yet adopted but they are revising; and 3% are very close to completing the final draft.

Of the plans that have been adopted, a majority of them are not seen as enforceable plans in the community. Only 15%, or three of those communities (n=20) indicated that their plan is enforceable and people or groups in the community could be held responsible for implementing or abiding by the strategies in the plan. Of those that stated their plan was enforceable, the entity responsible for enforcing the plan is the

youth council or commission for two communities and the city council or similar governing body for one of the communities.

Plan Components

To get a sense of how YMPs are organized, I took an inventory of which plan components are included in each of the documents. Table 4.2 lists which components I identified. A “1” in the table means that the component is included and “0” means that it is not included. Almost all of the plans include general components such as a table of contents, goals, objectives, and strategies or action items. However, fewer YMPs include components such as a description of the community demographics, an implementation plan, indicators of success, an assessment or evaluation plan, or a spatial plan or map.

Table 4.2: Basic plan components included in YMPs¹¹ (N=38)

ID	Community	Table of Contents	Goals	Objectives/ Desired Outcomes	Actionable Items or Strategies	Community Demographics	Implementation Plan	Indicators of success	Assessment/ Evaluation plan	Spatial Plan or Map
1	Albany, CA	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
2	Arcadia, CA	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
3	Claremont, CA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
4	Diamond Bar, CA	1	1	1	1	1		0		1
5	Indio, CA	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
6	La Canada Flintridge, CA	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
7	Northern Fair Oaks, CA	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Oakley, CA	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
9	Palo Alto, CA	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
10	Pleasanton, CA	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0
11	Pomona, CA	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	0
12	San Jose, CA	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
13	Santa Ana, CA	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
14	Santa Clarita, CA	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
15	Sierra Madre, CA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
16	Temecula, CA	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
17	Thousand Oaks, CA	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
18	Vacaville, CA	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
19	Brighton, CO	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
20	La Plata County, CO	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
21	El Paso County, CO	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
22	Manchester, CT	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
23	Broward County, FL	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
24	Chatham County, GA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
26	Grand Rapids, MI	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0
27	Olmsted County, MN	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
28	Omaha, NE	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
30	Santa Fe, NM	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
31	Lakewood, OH	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
32	Portland/Multnomah County, OR	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

¹¹ Since I was only able to obtain copies of 38 plans, this table is based on that total. I have omitted numbers 25, 29 and 40 from this table.

Table 4.2 Con't.

ID	Community	Table of Contents	Goals	Objectives/ Desired Outcomes	Actionable Items or Strategies	Community Demographics	Implementation Plan	Indicators of success	Assessment/ Evaluation plan	Spatial Plan or Map
33	Charleston, SC	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
34	Chesapeake, VA	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
35	Hampton, VA	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	James City County, VA	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
37	Newport News, VA	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0
38	Roanoke, VA	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
39	Virginia Beach, VA	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
41	Ho Chunk Nation	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
	Total	34	34	36	31	21	19	15	9	3
	Percent (out of 38 plans)	89	89	95	82	55	50	39	24	8

Creation Process

In the questionnaire, I asked communities about the impetus for creating their YMP and to give an example of it. The most common response was to improve the general quality of the community for young people (44%, N=18). Other reasons include: to implement programs for the youth council (17%); to address a specific issue like youth violence (17%); as a special project of community leaders (17%); and to coordinate services and efforts (11%).

Different stakeholder groups are involved in the creation of YMPs (N=25). Table 4.3 shows the extent that each stakeholder group was involved, with the percentages representing the number of communities out of 25 that indicated the particular amount of involvement. The table shows that for most communities, the creation process included significant involvement by youth council members and other local youth. This is similar to findings from the content analysis of the master plan documents, showing that 55% (21 out of 38) of the YMPs include a description of youth involvement in their creation process. I discuss youth participation in the creation process further in Chapter Five.

Table 4.3: Stakeholder involvement in YMP creation¹² (N=25)

Stakeholder	Involved or Extremely involved (%)	Slightly involved or not involved at all (%)	NA (%)
School District	89	12	0
Community non-profits serving youth	89	8	4
Local youth NOT part of the youth council	84	16	0
Youth Council Members	81	8	12
Police or Judicial System Staff	75	25	0
Mayor	72	20	8
Private Sector	72	28	0
City Council or Board of Trustees	68	24	8
Teachers or Staff at Individual Schools	64	36	0
Legal Staff	40	52	8
County Commissioners	28	52	20
Human Resources Staff	21	63	0
Land Use Planning staff	20	64	16
Financial Staff	20	64	16
Transportation Planners	12	76	12
Environmental Groups or Staff	4	68	28
Public Works Staff	4	72	24

Ironically, when land use planners were involved at any level other than “not involved at all”, the resulting YMPs were less likely to include a focus on the physical environment. This trend was also true when cross-tabulating the involvement of transportation planners/engineers, public works staff, and environmental groups with the YMPs that had a focus on the physical environment and place. The relatively low number of communities, in which planners (either land use or transportation) were “involved or extremely involved” is also surprising considering the findings of the American Planning Association 2008 survey which showed 98 percent of

¹² I gave the option of NA in case a particular stakeholder was not appropriate for a community or a particular type of plan.

planners (N=944) “believe they can play a role in helping communities become family friendly” (Israel & Warner, 2008, p. 2).

The median number of stakeholder groups involved at any level other than not involved at all was 11 (standard deviation = 2.59). The minimum number mentioned was six and the highest was 16. However, I wrote this question with a list of 16 possible stakeholder types and asked people to indicate what level they were involved in the process. With this in mind, more than 16 stakeholder groups contributing to the process is possible.

I ran cross-tabulations between the number of stakeholder groups that were involved slightly to extensively with: a focus on collaboration and coordination; the intended outcome being improved communication between groups; the impetus being the need to coordinate efforts and services; and the significant result being an increase in collaboration. None of these cross-tabulations resulted in a statistically significant relationship, indicating that those plans intended to achieve collaboration did not necessarily include more stakeholder groups than plans without that intent.

I asked communities about the factor most responsible for the creation of their YMP (open-ended question; N=21). The two most common factors given were: having the support of community leaders (33%) and the ability for multiple departments to

cooperate on youth issues (33%). Other factors indicated by multiple communities: the commitment of the community to address the major issues affecting their youth (19%); and working with a consultant or non-profit to help coordinate the creation process (14%). Factors mentioned by only one community include: youth involvement (5%); having a narrow focus to the plan (5%); and having available funding to conduct the work (5%).

Focus Areas

In an open-ended question in the questionnaire, I asked communities to indicate the focus areas addressed in their YMP. The minimum number of focus areas mentioned was two and the maximum was nine for any one community, with the average being six (N=26). The three most common self-reported focus areas for the YMPs were: providing opportunities for youth civic engagement and community participation (58%); addressing health issues related to behavioral, physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (58%); and ensuring the coordination and cooperation between community entities (58%).

The focus on civic engagement and community participation was exemplified by:

Oakley, CA – “Youth Civic Participation”

Newport News, VA – “Youth participation in planning and decision-making and opportunities for leadership development”

La Canada Flintridge, CA – “Encourage additional avenues for participation to the youth in our community”

The focus on health includes both specific issues and more general health goals, exemplified by the statements:

Santa Ana, CA – “Childhood obesity”

Broward County, FL – “Behavioral Health/Substance Abuse/Suicide Prevention”

Pleasanton, CA – “Healthy youth and families”

The focus on coordination and cooperation between different entities or population groups in the communities was exemplified by:

Temecula, CA – “Establish Public-Private Partnerships to address needs.”

Claremont, CA – “Get the Whole Community Involved”

Newport News, CA – “Creation of youth/adult partnerships to increase communication, skill development and knowledge”

All focus areas are listed in Table 4.4 in order of commonality. The three areas that I focus on for this dissertation are listed in bold.

Table 4.4: Major focus areas identified through the questionnaire (N=26)

Focus Area	# of plans
Civic Engagement and Youth Participation	15 (58%)
Coordination and Cooperation between entities	15 (58%)
Health	15 (58%)
Education	14 (54 %)
Family and Adult Role models	13 (50%)
Recreation and Social Programs	12 (46%)
Youth Development	11 (42%)
Business and Economy	11 (42%)
Physical Environment and Place	10 (38%)
Safety	9 (35%)
Early Childhood	7 (27%)
Diversity and Inclusivity	6 (23%)
Leveraging Resources	5 (19%)
Evaluation and Reporting	4 (15%)
Transition to Adulthood	3 (12%)

When I compare the information in Table 4.4 to results from my content analysis (see Table 4.5), I can present a different summary of the focus areas for the YMPs.¹³ The focus areas from the questionnaire are those that communities self-identified for their individual YMP. In contrast, the focus areas identified through the content analysis process are those that I found to be most prevalent across 38 of the YMPs.

¹³ It should be noted that the content analysis and the questionnaire did not include the exact same YMPs as explained in Chapter Three.

Table 4.5: Focus areas identified through content analysis (N=38)

Focus Area Node	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
Youth participation	38 (100%)	1,022	66,879
Diversity and equal representation	38 (100%)	412	25,469
Physical environment	37 (97%)	463	31,876
Collaboration and Coordination	36 (94%)	516	41,537
Monitoring and Evaluation	34 (89%)	247	23,403
Information dissemination about programs and resources in the community	33 (87%)	583	34,168
Adult training	30 (79%)	227	12,694
Child and youth development	30 (79%)	304	31,951
Safety (non-physical environment related)	27 (71%)	135	11,348
School or education	26 (68%)	251	27,674
Funding for programs	26 (68%)	149	11,285
Health (mental and physical)	16 (42%)	131	14,390

Some of the differences between Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 can be explained because of the different interpretations that I made versus what the staff person who answered the questionnaire might have made. For example, I created a category called “adult training”, which includes topics such as parenting classes, city staff training, and training and/or certification for daycare workers. However, the list of focus areas identified through the questionnaire includes “adult and family role models” and “early childhood”. Both of these topic areas could easily be interpreted differently and/or re-worded to fall within “adult training”.

In addition, “leveraging resources” was identified in the questionnaire, yet it could also be described as a focus on “funding for programs”, which is an area I identified in the content analysis. Although the YMPs may refer to funding, staff filling out the

questionnaire may not have seen “funding” as a focus area for their plan, but as a natural requirement to consider for each program recommended in the YMP. Other topic areas may also be interpreted differently.

An additional reason for the differences between these two lists of focus groups could be that through content analysis of the YMP documents, I was interpreting the product of a long process that included multiple stakeholders. Yet, a single staff person, who may or may not have been part of the creation process for the YMP in their community, completed the questionnaire and gave their interpretation of the focus areas of the plan. Unless the staff person filled out the questionnaire while referring directly to the YMP, their interpretation could be influenced by many factors, including a shift in priorities, recent accomplishments, current political agendas, and other issues related to children and youth in a community.

Despite these discrepancies, the two lists of focus areas are relatively aligned. Using the focus areas identified through the questionnaire, I ran numerous cross-tabulations to identify if any community characteristics were correlated with them.

Communication and coordination among entities was the only focus area that was significantly correlated with population size. Among the smaller cities of 100,000 people and less, 80% include a focus on communication and coordination ($\chi^2 = 8.485$; $df=3$; $p<0.037$). Although I do not have enough supplemental information to know

specifically why this is significant for smaller communities and not larger communities, one reason could be that smaller communities usually have fewer staff working within a single department. Therefore, in order to be more efficient and accomplish more for their children and youth, the coordination with other community entities or city departments may be desired.

There was no significant relationship between the focus of the plan and the department or agency in which the YMP is administered. This is surprising since I would have thought that YMPs administered out of parks and recreation departments, for example, would have a more significant focus on the physical environment and the provision of recreation facilities.

I evaluated my three focus areas during the content analysis of the YMP documents and identified multiple sub-themes for each. See Table 4.6 for complete list of sub-themes.

Table 4.6: Sub-themes identified through content analysis (N=38)

Youth Participation in Everyday Community Life Sub-Themes	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
1. Recreation and social activities	35 (92%)	231	15,878
2. Employment and career preparation	31 (82%)	191	11,130
3. Volunteering and community service	21 (55%)	86	5,842
4. Participation in media	5 (13%)	17	833
Sub-Total	37 (97%)	525	33,683
Youth Participation in Community Governance Sub-Themes	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
1. Participation in decision-making	29 (76%)	225	16,674
2. Youth/student councils	27 (71%)	96	6,477
3. Development of leadership skills	24 (63%)	107	6,194
4. Participation in creating YMPs	21 (55%)	62	5,622
5. Conducting research or evaluation	5 (13%)	7	229
Sub-Total	35 (92%)	497	35,196
Total for Youth Participation	38 (100%)	1,022	68,879

Physical Environment Sub-Themes	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
1. Spaces to be used by children and youth	35 (92%)	265	21,213
2. Transportation	27 (71%)	97	5,766
3. Safety (related to the physical environment)	22 (58%)	47	2,178
4. Place attachment and community connection	10 (26%)	31	1,820
5. Natural environment	6 (16%)	19	842
6. Public art	2 (5%)	4	57
Total	37 (97%)	463	31,876

Diversity and Equal Representation Sub-Themes	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
1. Awareness and inclusion of diverse populations	32 (84%)	137	5,958
2. Low cost options and financial support	24 (63%)	122	11,369
3. Focus on all youth	23 (61%)	51	2,242
4. Accessibility	17 (45%)	40	2,542
5. Bilingual resources available	15 (39%)	21	1,347
6. Recognition of faith-based organizations	12 (32%)	19	1,038
7. Intergenerational work	11 (29%)	22	973
Total	38 (100%)	412	25,469

In the next three chapters, I discuss each of these three areas in detail, youth participation, the physical environment, and diversity/equal representation.

Theoretical Framework

Twenty-five of the 38 YMPs refer to a model or framework that the community follows. These models either provide the overriding philosophy about children and youth or a more practical framework for developing strategies that accomplish a community's goals. The YMP documents refer to a total of six different frameworks. They include:

- *Search Institute* – The Search Institute framework is based on youth development, resiliency and prevention and provides a widely used list of 40 developmental assets (<http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets>).
- *Communities that Care* – Communities that Care (CTC) provides a research-based model to promote risk-focused prevention of problem behaviors. (<http://beta.ctcdata.org/>).
- *National League of Cities 7 Action Areas* – The National League of Cities 7 Action Areas are presented as part of their *City Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth*. The seven areas provide general categories in which local action can be taken on behalf of young people and their families and include: early childhood development;

youth development; education and afterschool; health and safety; youth in transition; family economic success; and neighborhoods and community (http://www.nlc.org/iyef/a_city_platform/).

- *Ready by 21* – The Ready by 21 approach was developed by the Forum for Youth Investment to focus on collaboration between leaders in a community and build on current initiatives and resources (<http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/readyby21>).
- *America's Promise Alliance* – American's Promise Alliance is a cross-sector partnership that focuses on five key areas for children and youth: caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others (<http://www.americaspromise.org/>).
- *National Network for Youth* – The National Network for Youth is a network of community-based organizations focusing on the needs of runaway, homeless, and disconnected youth through advocacy and community building (<http://www.nn4youth.org/>).

Although most communities mentioned just one of the frameworks, five communities mentioned two of the frameworks, and one community mentioned four of them in its YMP. See Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Theoretical and practical models used by communities (N=38)

Community	Search Institute	Communities that Care	NLC 7 action areas	Ready by 21	America's Promise Alliance	National Network for youth	Total
Albany, CA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arcadia, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Claremont, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Diamond Bar, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Indio, CA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
La Canada Flintridge, CA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northern Fair Oaks, CA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oakley, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Palo Alto, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pleasanton, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Pomona, CA	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
San Jose, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Santa Ana, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Santa Clarita, CA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sierra Madre, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Temecula, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Thousand Oaks, CA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vacaville, CA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Brighton, CO	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
La Plata County, CO	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
El Paso County, CO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manchester, CT	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Broward County, FL	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Chatham County, GA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand Rapids, MI	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Olmsted County, MN	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Omaha, NE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Santa Fe, NM	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Lakewood, OH	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Portland/Multnomah County, OR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Charleston, SC	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chesapeake, VA	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Hampton, VA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
James City County, VA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.7 Con't.

Community	Search Institute	Communities that Care	NLC 7 action areas	Ready by 21	America's Promise Alliance	National Network for youth	Total
Newport News, VA	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
Roanoke, VA	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Virginia Beach, VA	1	1	0	0	1	1	4
Ho Chunk Nation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	20	3	4	1	4	1	

Target Population

I asked communities which populations of young people their YMP targets and gave a list of answer choices. Although 39% of communities indicate that they target all youth, most of the plans target specific populations (N=26). Table 4.8 lists the self-reported target populations.

Table 4.8: Target population for YMPs identified in the questionnaire (N=26)

Target Population	# of plans	% of plans out of 26
Middle school age	19	73
High school age	19	73
Elementary age	15	58
Young people in low-income families	14	54
Young people who identify with a racial minority	13	50
Young people with delinquency problems	12	46
Young people in middle-income families	12	46
Young people in high-income families	11	42
First and second generation immigrant young people	11	42
Young people with developmental disabilities	11	42
Babies and toddlers	11	42
All youth	10	39
Homeless young people	10	39
Young people with physical disabilities	10	39

YMPs that target middle-school youth and high-school youth completely overlap, 73% of the YMPs target both populations. No communities target one OR the other.

In addition, when I compare the self-reported target groups to results from various text searches within the YMP documents, I found that these target population groups are not always mentioned. For example, ten of the communities indicate that their plan targets homeless young people. However, when I ran a word search in NVivo for the word “homeless”, I found 0 matches. Table 4.9 includes the results of several word searches related to target population groups.

Table 4.9: Word frequencies in YMP documents (N=38)

Word or Term	Present in # of Plans
Homeless	0
Disability OR Disabilities OR Disable	19
Immigrant	4
Low-income OR low SES	15
Middle-income	1
High-income	1
Minority	10

Many of these plans only include the word that I searched for once. In addition, although the number of plans that include the specific word is sometimes high (such as “disability”), the word does not always refer to recommendations for that target population. Instead, many times the words are used to describe the existing demographics of the community.

Since the N value for the questionnaire data regarding the target population was less than the N value for the content analysis (26 versus 38), I expected to see larger numbers from the content analysis. For two of the terms, “disability” and “low-income”, this is true. For the other terms, the number of communities that self-identified their target population was higher than the number of YMP documents that actually contained words commonly used to describe that population group. These discrepancies point to the benefit of a multiple method approach.

In addition, several communities describe a specific desire to not identify or target specific populations of youth, but to instead focus on the entire population of young people. Although this desire may fit within an equity-based agenda, if specific population groups are marginalized because of certain barriers, such as income-level or ability, their needs may not be addressed. I discuss this issue further in *Chapter Seven: Diversity and Equal Representation*.

Plan Implementation

Of the communities that adopted a YMP (N=23), 96% indicated they are currently implementing it. I asked communities to give examples of how their plan is being implemented and what actions have been taken to accomplish the goals in the plan. The most common answer was creating partnerships and committees to focus on plan implementation, stated by 58% of communities (N=19). For example, Pomona, CA states:

We have a Community Board that meets on a monthly basis made up of community members representing various youth and family serving entities, including education, government, faith based and, non-profit agencies along with Pomona residents.

The second most common answer, indicated by 42.1%, was to set short term objectives and priorities. For example, Broward County, FL stated, “Committees have been working on Action Plans to implement the broader strategies of the Children’s Strategic Plan”.

Seven out of 23 (32%) of communities indicated that they are accomplishing the goals of their YMP by creating youth-focused programs and initiatives in the community. For example, Diamond Bar, CA states:

From the YMP we have implemented a conflict resolution program (PeaceBuilders) into the Summer Day Camp, implemented a youth at risk program with the California Conservation Corp., and started a youth leadership volunteer group that creates activities for youth by youth and volunteers throughout the community. This group has an adult group of community volunteers to guide them and work on other goals of the YMP.

Six out of 23 (26%) of communities indicated they are offering classes and training to develop skills and build awareness to accomplish the goals in the YMP. For example, Charleston, SC:

We are currently revising a proposal to conduct training for youth and adults so they can partner together to make programmatic and funding decisions.

Less common actions that communities take to implement the YMPs include:

- Coordinate with the youth council (5 out of 23, 21%)
- Conduct research and evaluation (5 out of 23, 21%)
- Disseminate Information (5 out of 23, 21%)
- Undertake fundraising (3 out of 23, 13%)
- Provide Civic Engagement Opportunities (3 out of 23, 13%)
- Focus on parental support (2 out of 23, 9%)
- Increase staff (2 out of 23, 9%)

Implementation cannot happen without the necessary **human and financial resources**. The most common resource available in communities is available staff (open-ended question; 78%; N=19). Other resources include: city or county funding (67%); community support or volunteers (33%); financial support through non-profits (28%); and grant funding (11%). Figure 4.2 shows the relative availability of different resources for implementation.

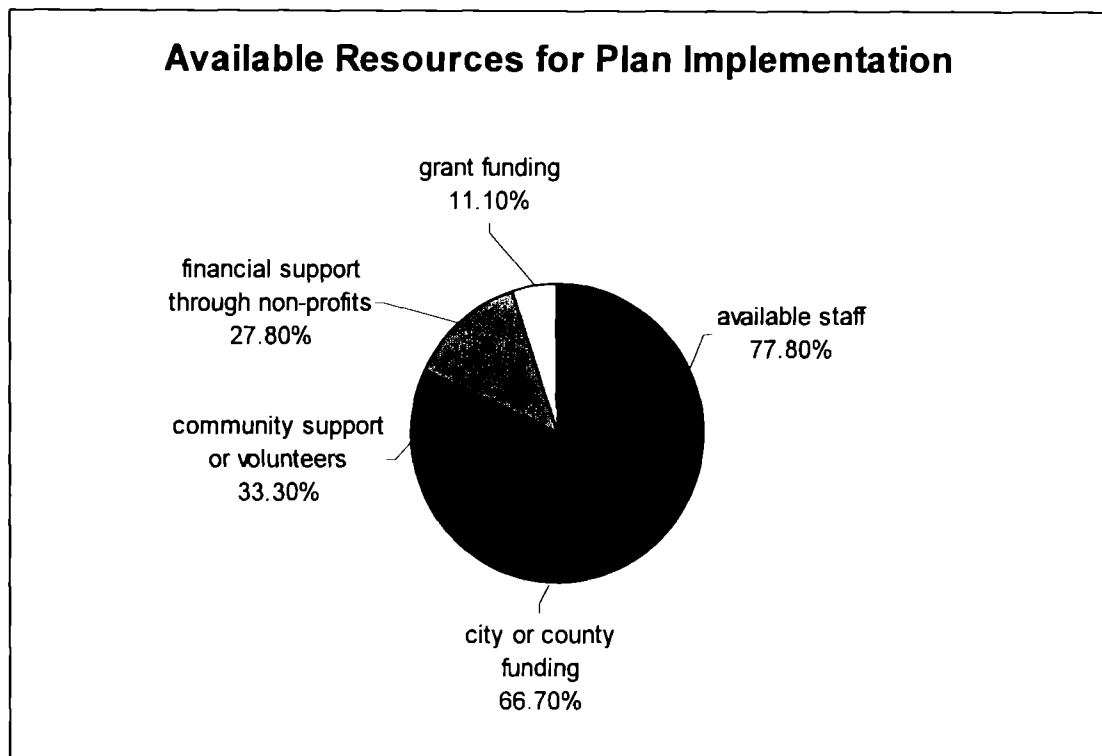


Figure 4.2: Available Resources for YMP Implementation (N=19)¹⁴

¹⁴ The total percentage add up to more than 100% since communities answered more than one available resource for plan implementation.

Despite available resources, communities still face **challenges** as they implement their YMP. I asked communities in an open-ended question to describe the biggest challenge they face, over half of the communities described **dealing with departmental silos**, a lack of cooperation among staff and officials, and ensuring the master plan is complementary to other community plans or initiatives (56%, N=18). This challenge was described in various ways. For example:

Diamond Bar, CA – Getting the two school district Boards to understand the importance of the collaboration. It took nearly two years of nurturing and educating the Boards and the community.

Budget cuts and a lack of funding was the next most common challenge (39%). For example:

La Plata County, CO – Naturally, having adequate financial resources to implement the plan is a challenge in these difficult economic times for both government and the community. Yet, despite this, we have demonstrated that much can be done to develop assets even with limited resources by rethinking how we think about, interact with and engage youth.

Other challenges include: a lack of awareness of the YMP in the community (22%); getting community members involved, including youth (17%); and the turnover of staff or elected officials (11%). All of these challenges can significantly impede the implementation of a YMP if they cannot be overcome or dealt with. For example, a lack of awareness about the YMP can prevent others from following the principles set forth in the plan and understand how youth should be treated and/or included in community processes. If young people are unaware of the plan, they may not

understand the role that they could serve in their community or the effort the community leaders are taking to specifically address issues they face. The lack of awareness can also relate to getting community members, including youth, involved in the strategies outlined in the YMP. People may not be aware of specific ways they can get involved. Finally, the turnover of staff or elected officials can be a significant obstruction if it also results in a lack of funding, staff time, and other resources allocated to implement the plan.

During my interviews with staff and community members in four communities, I asked if city councils or other leadership groups are following the plan. A high-school student during the creation process and a former youth member of the youth commission in Brighton, CO thought that the city council was using the plan to guide decisions and make recommendations:

I think city council bases their decisions that affect youth on [the YMP], yes. Because the city council is really behind us, and the youth commission is becoming a really big thing in Brighton and we are nationally known. I really do think they use it or look at it or keep it in the back of their minds.

As a young adult member of the youth commission, the former high-school student from Brighton, CO also discussed how the youth commission uses the YMP:

Yes, that's kind of what we were based off of. That's how we came about. We use it for some things, not everything. But when we are looking for ideas or something to do, we'll refer back to it.

When I asked if new members of the youth commission become familiar with the YMP right away, she stated:

No. Every term for the youth commission goes two years and we are able to be on for four years completely, so two terms. And the terms are weird, they start during each school year and then we'll go for the school year and then restart again. But I don't even think we've even brought up the master plan for like two years for the last two groups. Yeah, I don't think we've even brought it up. I just think that some of it is a lot more complicated and they probably wouldn't care or understand it.

The interviewee went on to share that the YMP was probably better suited for use by a group like city council since they would know how to address some of the more complicated recommendations.

My interview with a staff member in Brighton, CO revealed a slightly different perspective about whether their city council was using their plan.

Not really. And I don't think it's because they don't want to or don't have access to it. I think it's just, if we had the director in this program that could physically and intentionally take some of the goals and recommendations and start working on them and getting them through... there's nobody to work on that. I don't think it's a lack of want or need for it. I think it's a lack of people. Manpower I guess you could say.

The staff member with Brighton, CO also stated that although the youth commission used the YMP to set its goals, there are not a lot of goals or strategies in the plan that the youth commission does not have the capacity to accomplish.

And a lot of things now that are left to do, I don't want to say that the commission can't do, but that's all I can think of. For instance, getting the

school-based health centers. There's nothing that the commission can really do to work on that. It's more a city and a school district thing. So I think, for instance, they've developed a party in a bag initiative, they are working on a community calendar, they've created their own youth commission by giving them a voice, they've... they've done a lot of this stuff. So I would say, yeah, I revisit it but I don't focus on it because I think they need new challenges and new things and a lot of things on here are over their heads and out of their hands.

During my interview, a staff member in Palo Alto, CA also described how its youth council bases their goals on those stated in the YMP:

So each year [the youth commission members] pick a new goal. But it's based off of what the YMP says. So they don't just pick something out of thin air, they try to work off of the YMP. Which in itself is kind of broad so as long as we are following, or trying to hear the youth voice, then for the most part we are trying to follow the plan.

When I asked this same interviewee to describe how city council and other community groups use the YMP, he stated:

[R]ecently I became a part of a youth collaborative group, which is just basically a group of people that come together. It is everyone that works with youth in the community so we have YMCAs and youth community leaders and a whole bunch of non-profit groups that are part of this group. And we are using [the YMP] as a guide to how we go about putting on events or why we even meet and ensuring we use our resources as best as possible.

I don't think it's on the forefront of the city council, although this year's city council took youth wellbeing as one of its top priorities. Although I don't think they spoke specifically about the youth master plan when they made that goal. It does connect and goes hand in hand.

However, this staff member in Palo Alto, CA did not think that their YMP was written for the city council. Although the interviewee was not in the community

during the creation of the YMP, he has since been put in charge of their youth council.

I don't necessarily think that at this point it was written for them. I know that they approved it and accepted it as guidelines that they will follow. But I don't think it's been put in front of them very often. I think it's really myself and the youth council who have started to put the YMP in front of people more often now than it was.

This interviewee also adds that although the current city council members in Palo Alto are familiar with the plan, it is unlikely that they have read it closely.

I think it is becoming more relevant and it has become more upfront. The city council will know about the YMP. I don't think the current leaders have read it thoroughly, but they all kind of know about it and they understand that it's out there. But again, I would say that it has been a couple years when it fell off the map and no one was really talking about it.

A staff member in Santa Clarita, CA stated that although many of the current city council members are for youth issues and the YMP helped them develop that interest, they may not always refer to the YMP.

I would say that of the five city council members, two are very actively involved in youth programming and would use the guiding principles of the YMP and they're the things they are interested in. They wouldn't sit up at the dais and say, "it says in the YMP we have to do this" but I think going through the process of creating it and adopting it, it became part of their philosophy.

A staff member in Santa Fe, NM discusses a slightly different use for their YMP during an interview. She stated that she uses the YMP for several reasons, including

as a guide during the budgeting process, and to inform their contracting and grant-making process.

When we had money for a consultant and when he was available, he would do an annual update and an action plan update. And he would present that to the commission [for children and youth] and they would choose what they wanted to work on. I have shared [the YMP] with people. When people want to know what we are doing, I give them a copy of the plan and talk about it and use it for reference material. But how I use it, annually when we have our budget process in the spring, I go through it and update it and take it to the commission and we discuss it. It also informs our contracting and our grant-making process which happens every year along with the needs assessment. That is kind of how it's used. It's very useful for the updating of the budget because they want to know your accomplishments, so it's a framework.

Training

Although training can encompass many different topics, research has shown that in the context of youth participation, adults need training to understand the potential of youth as partners in decision-making. This training should address the misunderstandings that can surface when people work with others who have different aspirations, cultures, and constraints. In addition, structural inequalities, such as the ability to make decisions, can present issues when adults in a community work with less powerful stakeholders (Matthews, 2003, p. 267).

Staff members within each community receive varying degrees of training about how to use the YMP. Staff members who work directly with youth often receive extensive training, while staff members who work on policies and services that affect youth

receive basic or minimal training about working with youth. Figure 4.3 shows the relative levels of training for staff and elected officials, staff working directly with youth, and staff working on policies and services that affect youth.

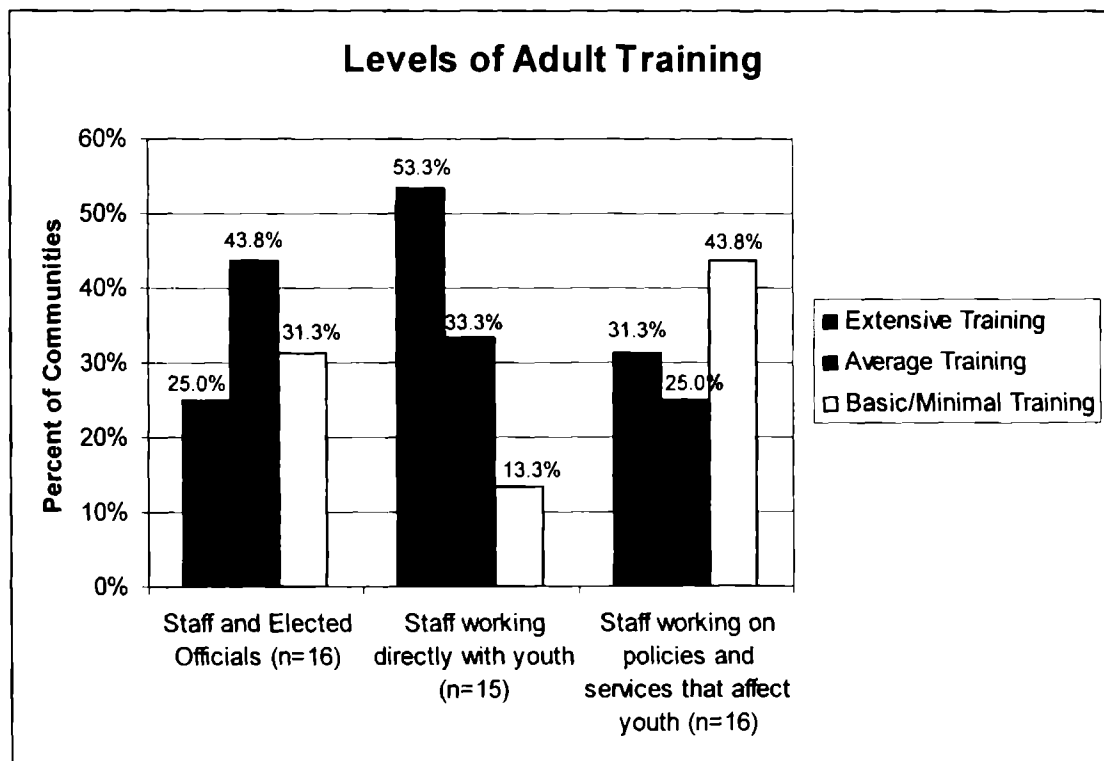


Figure 4.3: Levels of Adult Training

Funding

I asked the communities a multiple choice question about the amount budgeted in 2008 for implementation or enforcement of the plan. Almost half (44%) of communities indicated they budgeted \$70,000 or more, with most of those

communities (32%) budgeting \$100,000 or more. At the other end of the spectrum, 24.0% had \$0 budgeted with an additional 4% under \$5,000, and an additional 8% between \$5,000 and \$9,999. The remaining 20% of communities budgeted in the middle range between \$10,000 and \$50,000. The source of money falls into two categories: general funds (95%) and grants or sponsorships/donations (52%), with almost half (48%) of the communities receiving money from both sources.

I asked communities an open-ended question about how decisions are made about spending the money budgeted for implementation of the YMP. Four different answers were given (N=17). The two most common responses were that approval to spend the money had to be given by staff working with the youth council (59%) and elected officials, such as city council members, gave approval to spend the money (53%). The other two answers included: youth council members approved spending decisions (24%) and money was spent according to grant requirements (12%). Half (50%) of the communities that indicated youth council members approved spending also indicated that staff approve spending decisions, perhaps meaning that adults give youth guidance about spending decisions or have the final say.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Using a multiple-choice question, I asked communities whether they monitor or evaluate their YMP (N=26). A majority of communities indicated that they either do

currently (58%) or intend to evaluate their plan in the future (35%). For the communities that monitor or evaluate its plan (N=24) a majority, 68%, did not mention a particular group that monitors the plan but indicated that the community measures and tracks certain indicators. A few communities (14%) bring in an outside evaluator. In addition, for 19 of the 24 communities (79%) youth are involved in the monitoring and evaluation process. For all but one community, this involves youth being responsible for or participating in conducting the evaluation, and in many cases this involves the youth council members. For example in James City County, VA:

Community service-learning projects are identified by youth and staff on an annual basis. The measures tracked include number of projects completed per year (minimum, 4/year), hours used to complete the project, and the number of participants completing each project. Projects include volunteering with Salvation Army; crafting with retirement community; blanket making; canned food drive at 8 Before and After School Program sites; scarves for elderly; pet food drive for humane society; holiday cards to retirement communities; decorating the Christmas tree at a community center, etc.

And in Grand Rapids, MI:

Our Youth Commissioners have just released a GRTeen Profile -- data from over 1,500 teens about life in the city. This data will inform the YMP. Our Youth Commissioners worked with the evaluators in the design and development of the survey, recruitment procedures, and the analysis of the report. They are also facilitating community discussions about the report at our community forums. They are also working to implement a Teen website not only for information but for how teens can give input on community issues.

Despite the fact that 19 out of 24 communities indicate they involve children and youth in the process of evaluating and monitoring their YMP, only 11 YMP

documents reference this idea. In addition, many of the YMP documents that recommend youth involvement in the evaluation process, many of them refer simply to asking youth to participate in a questionnaire or focus group in order to reassess their needs, rather than involving them in other aspects of evaluation.

This discrepancy raises two important questions. First, if the process for children and youth involvement in evaluation and monitoring is not clearly outlined in the plan, will it be implemented? And, second, if many communities *are* including children and youth in evaluation and monitoring as they indicate in the questionnaire, why is not it part of the plan? Is it something that they decided to do after the plan was written based on additional information? However, despite these potential issues, the fact that 19 out of 24 communities include youth in the evaluation and monitoring of their YMP shows that perhaps the action is matching the rhetoric of youth participation.

About 1/3 or 35% (N=23) of the communities have made changes to their plans as a result of the evaluation. The most common change, mentioned by 43% of those communities that had made changes after evaluation (N=7), includes refocusing or reorganizing the youth services and programs in the community. Two other changes that were mentioned include updating action steps to make them more relevant and timely (29%) as described by Broward County, FL, “The committees are continually

updating action steps and strategies based on emerging needs, changing data trends, and opportunities to create system efficiencies”. And altering the process of soliciting community input (29%), as described by Vacaville, CA:

No changes have officially been adopted, but based on an extensive youth evaluation involving 1,700 surveys from middle-school students and community minded adults, focus groups and town hall meetings, the emphasis for the next three years will focus on increasing... the voice of youth within the community by greater involvement on community boards and advisory committees.

An interview I conducted with a staff member in Santa Clarita, CA revealed the challenge of monitoring privately owned community improvements:

[Our plan] identifies not only public improvements but also private improvements, when a teen dance club would be operated by a business owner rather than by government. So all of those are identified in [the plan], but whether they've actually been accomplished is another question.

My interview with a staff member in Palo Alto, CA also expressed a need for a more clearly defined agenda for evaluating and updating.

I would spell it out a little bit more, in terms of renewing, what that process looks like. [The YMP] does talk about every other year the youth council looking at the plan. But I think for it to be relevant, now and into the future, beyond myself or the youth council that is currently here, to spell out what that [evaluation process] would definitely look like.

I would definitely ask anyone who is writing one of these, how often does [the youth master plan] get looked at, and when it does, what is the process? If there are changes to be made, do they just make them or who should be involved in that? Who should know about the changes? I definitely think that is an important part of keeping these things up to date and in front of everyone in the community.

Similarly, during my interview with a staff member in Santa Clarita, CA, he discussed the need for incorporating more accountability into the YMP and making sure it is updated and monitored regularly.

To some degree the master plan is a binder that sits on a shelf. And because the community has this philosophy of taking care of our kids, we don't probably pull it down off the shelf and look at it. As I was saying to you, I haven't looked at it for a while because we live it everyday. And maybe, I probably would try to figure out how we get that document and make it more usable. How do I live it everyday? How do we reference back to it? I am on the board of another organization, a boys and girls club, and one of the things we do at our meetings, every officer has to refer back to our strategic plan and say how their report relates back to the strategic plan. It sounds kind of dumb and it sure is time consuming and a pain in the butt, but it requires me to, every time before I go to a meeting, to read my strategic plan. And so some system that gets us to go back and revisit it, if nothing else. If we've done everything [recommended in the plan] and it's all in place, then maybe we ought to think about redoing [the YMP]. We've done that with our parks and recreation master plan. Where we say we need more trails and another swimming pool. But I'm not sure we always do that with our YMP.

A few of the YMPs, such as the plan for Brighton, CO, include scorecards to help determine how many of the YMP goals are met. During my interview with a staff member from Brighton, I asked the interviewee if anyone fills out the scorecard and if it had been filled out since the plan was adopted in 2007.

I've never filled it out. I don't want to say it's never been looked at but I just think that... again I think with a person above me, with their oversight, I think one of their duties would be to fulfill the master plan agenda. Right now, since the [former director] who was here put in her two weeks notice at the same time this master plan came out, there really has been no director. We had a lady in here about six months that took about as long for her to get familiar with everything and she just started to work on some stuff and then she was pregnant. So there really has been no director since the creation and adoption of the master plan. So it's a great scorecard, it's a great idea but I don't think

it's been used.

A consultant working with Santa Fe, NM reflected on whether the plan is being used for its intended purpose and mentioned that once its plan was streamlined it was easier to monitor its progress:

... the first few editions of it were so detailed, in terms of time frames, and so it was kind of difficult to work with. So over the years it became streamlined and it makes it a lot easier at the end of the year to say we did this, check it off, we didn't do this, and so forth.

Use of a Consultant

According to the YMP documents, 19 of the 38 communities hired outside consultants to help facilitate the creation process and/or write the plan. In at least one community, the text of the YMP indicated that a volunteer consultant was used. The communities in which I conducted interviews all had slightly different experiences with consultants. Brighton, CO used a well-known consultant from outside the community, while Santa Fe, NM used a consultant who had written other plans for the city and could be considered an invested member of the community. Santa Clarita, CA did not use a consultant but used City staff to create its plan. Despite these differences, all three were very happy with their process and resulting plan.

A staff member in Santa Fe, NM explained during an interview that they used a consultant who was very familiar with the City and had written other plans for different City entities:

... a consultant can work well if they are really part of the process. [Our consultant] came to our needs assessment meetings. He wrote our needs assessment reports, those that inform the plans. He was also on the county and maternal health council, and he was writing the health plan for the county. So he was very much involved. He also worked with local non-profits and did their strategic planning processes. He was very much in tune as sort of an inside partner with the workings of the youth, the youth provider community, and I suppose non-profits and schools.

So the other thing is that we don't have many staff people. It's me and one other. I finally got a project specialist position for this office about three years ago. I have had a different project specialist each year and I'm hiring again. It's a low paying job with a lot of responsibility and I can't do everything. I'm supposed to summarize these needs assessments. I'm supposed to do site visits to these programs. We have over a million dollar budget and it would be nice to have somebody to talk to and think with, other than the commission, about what we do. So that was really the value of the consultant, in addition to the fact that he was a good writer and a good thinker. I am not a city planner. I am not trained as a city planner. My background is in anthropology. I have a PhD in anthropology and studied how kids are raised in different cultures and urban anthropology that sort of thing. I suppose someone with a city planning background might be used to writing plans and feel comfortable with that.

The City of Brighton also used a consultant to facilitate their creation process. During an interview, I asked the former high-school student what it was like to have an outside consultant come in. The specific consultant that Brighton used had also worked with several other communities on their YMPs, including Hampton, VA.

When [the consultant] came down the first few times it was just him and then he brought one of his youth commissioners down. He helped and just kind of watched over us and if we had questions, he helped us with that and... [the

consultant] knew what he wanted to do and after a few months we took a step back and said 'okay this is what [Hampton, VA] is doing, and we should try to do that but in our own way.' So it was a good thing and a bad thing.

When I asked if she would change anything about the process of working with a consultant, she stated:

I think he got it done and we are starting to be nationally known because of him. Because he got us out of our bubble. And I think without him, we wouldn't have really been anything. So no, I wouldn't change anything.

The staff member in Brighton that I interviewed revealed a similar satisfaction with their consultant.

I got to work with him when the master plan was developed and be part of all the committees that contributed to the master plan. We worked with [the consultant] for about a year. Having his history and wisdom and direction and guidance, I don't think we could have created such a great plan and had such a strong youth commission had we not hired him. I am very in favor of that. I think it is a very new concept for communities – especially with how to give youth a voice. He was east coast. They've been doing it for 20 years, but for a lot of middle-America, it's a new thing. And I think to have the experience and the wisdom from somebody who has done it so long, just really helped put a lot of the City and the council at ease. I definitely think it's a great thing and I would tell anybody if they are really serious about doing it, and serious about doing it well and making a plan and starting something that is not just going to last for a couple years but last for decades, I really think they need to hire somebody to help just to give them direction and guidance. Because you wouldn't know what you were doing otherwise. You wouldn't know what it would look like or have ideas to go off. I know the woman who helped create the master plan [in Brighton], she was the director at the time. She flew out to Hampton, VA and visited Hampton's youth commission, which is where [the consultant] started. That's where he created it. And she got to see the ins and outs and just came back really inspired and revved up to do it here. And I think you really need that kind of base to start from. I am very pro-consultant.

Staff members from Santa Clarita, CA, a community that did not use a consultant, were also quite satisfied with their plan.

I would say that we got the plan we wanted, because the people who put the plan together were community stakeholders. And so they had a vested interest in the outcome. And no offense to consultants, but the plan got built more or less in a way to meet our needs rather than having to take somebody else's model and having to fit it. There are advantages to consultants and I certainly understand it, but the history of this organization and the city is to be non-bureaucratic so we would have probably gone this way, either way. It's just that our inclination is to do it ourselves.

Outcomes

In an open-ended question, I asked communities to describe the main outcomes that they hope to achieve with their YMP. The most commonly desired outcome relates to improving the quality and accessibility of programs and services, mentioned by 67% (14) of communities (N=21). Other outcomes included are listed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Desired outcome areas expressed in questionnaire (N=21)

Desired Outcome Area	% of Communities (actual number)
Improve quality and accessibility of programs and services	67% (14)
Increase civic engagement and youth voice	62% (13)
Reduce youth issues, such as teen pregnancy	57% (12)
Increase graduation and other successes	52% (11)
Improve communication	48% (10)
Improve the environment	38% (8)
Improve parenting and adult training	33% (7)
Assist with job placement and business community	33% (7)
Support implementation and monitoring	29% (6)
Improve childhood and school readiness	29% (6)
Increase community awareness and connection	24% (5)
Address transportation issues	14% (3)

When I cross-tabulated the desired outcome area with the department or agency in which the YMP was housed, two relationships were statistically significant. All (7 each) of the YMPs housed in an administrative department and a human services department had the desired outcome of improving the quality and accessibility of programs and services for young people, compared to only 50% (4) of the plans in parks and recreation departments and only 38% (3) of the plans in departments related to children, youth and families. ($\chi^2 = 8.063$; $df=3$; $p<0.045$).

The other outcome that was significantly associated with a particular type of department was the desire to increase graduation rates and other youth successes. This outcome was desired by 100% of the YMPs housed in a department related to children, youth and families. This compares to 33% in administrative departments,

25% of plans in parks and recreation departments, and 0% in human services departments. ($\chi^2= 12.648$; $df=3$; $p<0.005$).

These associations imply that the focus of the YMP often matches the focus and/or expertise of the department it is housed in. While this is not surprising, it begins to explain why most plans lack detailed recommendations regarding the physical environment. Since YMPs are not housed in planning departments, the expertise and/or focus of the planning staff is not prioritized in the YMP.

In an open-ended question, I asked communities to describe the most significant thing that happened as a **result** of their YMP (N=23). Although there was not one particular result that occurred for most of the communities, several different results were mentioned. The most commonly cited result was **the recognition of youth's assets and a new focus on youth engagement in the community**, indicated by 39% of communities. For example Newport News, VA described their result as, "Much greater focus on positive youth development, youth engagement across many organizations and sectors." And Brighton, CO wrote, "Youth have a voice in the city and are recognized as being a valued asset." This outcome was explained in more depth during the interview I conducted with a staff member from Brighton. "Other than just getting more involved in our government, local city government... I would not really say there is anything else other than a respect for the [youth] commission,

because they do what they said they were going to do”.

The second most commonly cited result was seeing an **increase in collaboration between departments or agencies** in the community (35%). For example, Broward County, FL described their result as, “Child serving agencies have increased collaboration across all systems and improved both system efficiency and delivery.” Similarly, during my interview with a staff member from Santa Fe, NM, collaboration was brought up:

One thing that the plan did is put [a list of programs and entities] all in one place so that people have a picture of what is happening. It is probably more than developing goals and objectives to increase communication with youth in the community. In the plan we talked a lot about the importance of collaboration and bringing all those entities together.

And Vacaville, CA wrote:

Continued cooperation and collaboration among City, schools and youth based organizations, eg. Multi-Disciplinary Task Force where police, probation, and schools work with specific at-risk youth and their families by developing strategies to help youth succeed.

Less common results include: creating programs and activities for youth in the community (22%); developing an awareness and greater understanding of youth issues in the community (13%); and lastly, being an award-winning program that is recognized as a model for other communities (9%).

Recommendations and Lessons Learned

Through an open-ended question in the questionnaire, I asked what recommendations communities would give to other communities that may be about to embark on the creation of a YMP. Twenty-two communities gave recommendations that I organized into seven different categories. The top recommendation, made by 68% of communities, was to **engage the public in the youth master planning process** and to keep them informed and excited about the work being done.

Other recommendations include:

- get **buy-in** from community leaders and policy makers (46%);
- have **clear goals and a vision** for the plan (36%);
- **research what other communities have done** before reinventing the wheel or making unnecessary mistakes (32%);
- form a **leadership committee** to coordinate the planning efforts (18%);
- ensure that **evaluation and monitoring are budgeted** and planned for ahead of time (14%);
- and finally, **secure funding** to complete the process (9%).

More than half of the communities (56%) indicated that they would make changes to their master plan creation process if they were to begin it all over again (N=25). Of those (N=16), the majority would **involve more stakeholders in the creation**

process (69%). For example, Columbus, GA wrote, “We would expand the involvement of the community to get a broader perspective and more input about the perceived issues in Columbus.”

Diamond Bar, CA wrote, “I would make sure to include all City departments so when the time comes to build or do a street fair, etc., they are on board.” And Claremont, CA indicated they would focus more on increasing involvement by young people in the community, “I would do most of the community engagement events directly on the school campuses to maximize input.”

A smaller percentage of the communities (31%) indicated they would **obtain memorandums of understanding** (MOUs) between different entities and get support and buy-in from community leaders in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their process. Official agreements would also support the functionality of partnerships created to support the YMPs.

A smaller percentage still (19%) would **take advantage of research**, either from the experiences of other communities or research done within their own community on relevant issues. And only 13% of the communities would make their **YMP more focused and streamline the creation process**. For example, Santa Fe, NM wrote, “We have done two [youth master plans]. The changes we made in the second one

were to narrow the focus from the whole community to just what the commission itself is tasked with.”

Although it did not come up in the questionnaire answers, during my interview with a staff member in Brighton, CO, she identified maintaining and training staff to work with the YMP as a major change that would improve their process.

Maybe the biggest thing is to try to maintain your staff. [The former coordinator] got married and had to move so it wasn't like it was her fault. But right after she left, they hired me part time to take over and I was coming in thinking, 'What am I supposed to be doing with this big book of recommendations that are way over my head. So I would just say, make sure that when you have somebody come out, you're going to spend the money to train that staff person and that they are definitely going to be on for a while to help see this started. So I think the commission had a hard time with losing [the former coordinator] and then just having me.

As this staff member was about to transition out of her current job and move to a different city, she further explained why having a consistent staff person to oversee the implementation of the YMP was important and a recommendation she would make to other communities.

I haven't done it this year because I know I'm going to transfer or transition out, but just to go back and look at the goals every year and try to set some goals based on the recommendations of the master plan. Just to try to keep it moving forward. I think we've done that, but I just think that's important. Again, and I don't know why this is important to me, but have a consistent staff person that loves kids, loves teenagers, loves their position. You can have all the skills in the world but you can't teach somebody to be good with kids. So for cities or communities that are looking at hiring someone for this position, you just definitely need somebody who will love the kids because the kids are going to respect them. Learn to love them and respect them and

they'll be more focused on their committee and their commission work if the person believes in them.

When the kids came up with this idea to get youth to serve on other boards, I thought it was a great idea. I thought, yeah, it has never been done. You know, it's this big thing to do. Let's try it, let's go for it. The worst they can say is no. But I had somebody come up and say, "that's no place for the youth". That was a person who served in our commission and I just thought, how horrible of you that you're here and you say you want to give youth a voice and you say you believe in them, but you don't think that this is the place for them. I don't know, that's my biggest thing is to have someone that believes in kids and helps give them a voice and give them confidence.

Conclusion

In general, YMPs are a fairly new type of plan, with **the earliest created in 1990**.

However, planners and landscape architects, professionals who typically create plans, are not as involved in their creation as I had anticipated. A majority of YMPs are overseen by departments that focus on: children, youth and families; human services; or administrative departments. Since planners and landscape architects are not usually staff members within those departments, there may be a greater need to hire consultants experienced in producing effective plans. Roughly **half of the communities hired consultants** to help write the plan and facilitate the creation process. Some communities need more help determining what they want or what will be useful to include in a YMP. Other communities have available staff members who can write plans and facilitate the engagement process without hiring a consultant.

Almost half of the YMPs were created to **improve the general quality of the community for young people**. Other reasons to create a YMP include implementing programs for the youth council in the community, addressing specific issues like youth violence, as a special project of community leaders, and to coordinate services and efforts related to children and youth.

Almost all of the plans include **general components** such as a table of contents, goals, objectives, and strategies or action items. However, fewer YMPs include components such as a description of the community demographics, an implementation plan, indicators of success, an assessment or evaluation plan, or a spatial plan or map. In addition, very few communities indicate that their plan is enforceable and people in the community could be held responsible for implementing or abiding by the strategies in the plan.

From the content analysis, I identified 12 major focus areas within 38 of the YMPs. Interestingly, the three areas I concentrate on within this study, youth participation, the physical environment, and diversity/equal representation, are the top three focus areas I identified within the content analysis. This may be because I was specifically looking for references to these areas. However, since these are also areas identified by the communities themselves in the questionnaire, it is likely that these are general themes covered in a majority of the YMP documents. In both the questionnaire and

the content analysis, **youth participation was identified as one of the top focus areas.**

In addition, to these areas, I found that many of the communities use an **asset based model**. Twenty out of 38 YMPs specifically refer to or use the Search Institute's developmental assets framework. The **recognition of youth's assets and a new focus on youth engagement** in the community was also the most commonly cited result of creating the master plan identified by communities.

Another major pattern I identified among the YMPs is a focus on **the collaboration or coordination between departments or community entities**. This was tied as the number one focus area identified by the communities in the questionnaire and the fourth most prevalent theme in the content analysis. In addition, communities responding to the questionnaire indicated this theme as the second most commonly cited result of creating the YMP.

Collaboration and coordination was also a theme within the recommendations that communities made to other communities interested in creating their own YMP. For example, eleven communities that gave recommendations suggested involving more stakeholders in the creation process. And four communities suggested obtaining

memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between different entities and getting support and buy-in from community leaders.

In the next chapter, I present my findings related specifically to youth participation.

CHAPTER FIVE:

FINDINGS ON YOUTH PARTICIPATION

In the previous chapter, I provided a detailed overview of YMPs and discussed most of the topics and issues that communities include in their plans. In this chapter, I specifically focus on how YMPs address youth participation in the community. Rather than restrict this to participation in community decision-making, I also describe youth participation in everyday community life since both areas were covered extensively in the YMPs.

Research on Youth Participation

In many ways, the focus on youth participation in YMPs follows the normative framework promoted by both participatory planning theory and advocacy planning theory. Both of these theories endorse the education of and engagement with marginalized community members.

Scholars suggest that when done “right” and youth are given the necessary training, numerous benefits can be anticipated for both the individual and the community (Checkoway, Pothukuchi & Finn, 1995, p.135). Based on discussions at a symposium

on “Children’s Participation in Community Settings” in Oslo, Chawla (2001) reported that benefits for children can include: more positive sense of self, increase sense of competence, greater sensitivity to the perspectives and needs of others, greater sense of fairness, increased understanding of democratic values and behaviors, preparation of lifelong participation, new social networks, new skills, and enjoyment. The benefits that communities can expect include: public education regarding children’s rights, positive public attitudes about children, increased social capital, and improved quality of life (p. 13).

In addition, efforts to involve young people can result in better planning (Carlson, 2006). For example, in Hampton, VA, youth planners suggested holding a block party in a neglected neighborhood that was ripe for redevelopment. Although adults were skeptical, the results of the block party resulted in a new crime watch organization in the area (Carlson, 2004).

Researchers identified two general areas of research within the context of youth participation: 1) research that focuses on youth development and individual benefits for youth; and 2) research focusing on youth involvement and active citizenship, emphasizing how participation leads to broader social outcomes, including social and political change (Vromen, 2008, p.5). Although, much of the research on participation focuses on the impacts on individual youth development (Bell, Vromen, & Collin

2008), scholars identify the need for additional research on the sustainability of youth engagement practices within community-scale systems (Zeldin et. al, 2007, p. 87). However, within YMPs, there is generally less discussion of the benefits of youth participation and more about what format it should take.

Research shows that creating a solid public awareness of youth engagement in community governance is critical to establish broad support for involving youth (Zeldin et al., 2007, p. 85). However, if there is no meaningful support behind the rhetoric or follow-through to actually make participation happen, the rhetoric becomes an empty claim. As Driskell and Kudva point out, “participation does not just happen” (Driskell & Kudva, 2009, p. 86).

For example, in Australia, a study reviewing the *Australian Report from the Prime Minister* found clear support for young people’s need to have a voice in community decisions but with no mention of how to enfranchise them and put power behind their voice (Bessant, 2003, p. 92). Timmerman also analyzed the rhetoric of participation within 26 youth policy documents in Northern and Western European Union Countries (Timmerman, 2008). The research revealed three central interpretations of participation, including: allowing youth to regain a sense of social responsibility and strengthen their social cohesion; to serve a political purpose by providing input about the current situation for youth; and for pedagogical purposes to give youth skills and

introduce them to political decision-making. Despite the comprehensive nature of the rhetoric, it is only effective when it is backed by strategic action. Research in Australia found that policies that rely on youth development frameworks acknowledge “the virtues of democratic participation, but stop-short of relinquishing any significant political power to young people” (Bessant, 2003, p. 94).

In addition, scholars have questioned meaningful participation when mixed-messages are disseminated or perceived. In an assessment of the *Youth for the Future Task Force Report* of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and other similar youth strategy documents from Australia, researchers asked about how well the current political rhetoric and the apparent official acceptance of participation leads to meaningful participation (Bessant, 2004, p. 387). The study identified three problems: 1) a failure to recognize the social, economic and political obstacles youth experience when trying to participate; 2) a failure to think through what is required for true democratic practice; and 3) the fact that the conceptualization and operationalization of official youth participation policies are at odds with the democratic participation rhetoric (Bessant, 2004, p. 387). Some of these problems are manifested through specific actions, including:

- Young people under the age of 18 are denied the right to vote;
- Schools are generally undemocratic institutions which rarely give young people the right to participate in decisions that affect them and often fail to

acknowledge liberties that other citizens enjoy such as privacy and free choice of dress;

- Young people have been denied the freedom of movement, speech, and assembly by not being allowed to participate in political activities such as protest marches;
- Youth curfews, policies that essentially exclude one group from public spaces that others are entitled to use, are enforced and justified by claims that they protect youth from becoming victims of crime and also prevent the youth themselves from committing crimes;
- Police powers are used against young people, often giving law enforcement officials power to detain youth who have committed no offense with justification that they need to protect youth from themselves and maintain social order;
- The ‘youth wage’ allows employers to pay young people lower wages for equal work; and
- High-levels of unemployment for young people ensure they are kept at the margins of economic activity and participation in the socio-economic and political life of the community (Bessant, 2004, p. 392-397).

Despite the gap between the rhetoric of participation and the reality in many situations, when participation programs are successful, researchers are often able to

identify good practice recommendations for achieving similar results in other contexts. One good practice is to view youth participation as an on-going process rather than as an isolated activity (Barber, 2009, p. 28). For example, work in Hampton, Virginia revealed two critical elements for sustained youth participation: 1) create an “ever-expanding system of meaningful opportunities that can attract and engage the greatest number of youth in the broadest spectrum of participation”; and 2) change the adult perspectives that see youth as “recipients of knowledge and services rather than resources to the ongoing challenge of building community” (Carlson, 2006, p. 93).

This research highlights some of the challenges and good practices in providing opportunities for meaningful youth participation in a community. In order to determine how the YMPs addressed these issues, I compiled information from the questionnaire data, the content analysis of the plan documents, and interviews with four communities.

YMPs – Inclusion of Youth Participation

In the questionnaire, I asked communities to list the focus areas for their YMP. Of the 26 communities that responded to this question, youth participation was mentioned by 58% (15) of the communities. For example, when asked to list their focus areas, Brighton, CO and Newport News, VA included the following:

“Create a structure that ensures that decisions made by the city and schools afford young people the opportunity to contribute their insights.” - Brighton, CO

“Youth participation in planning and decision-making” - Newport News, VA

Since the questionnaire results did not include all of the communities with YMPs, I also evaluated youth participation during my content analysis of the master plan documents. I first created a general youth participation node and created sub-themes as I read through each YMP. Through this process, I interpreted multiple types of youth participation that fell into one of two general categories: opportunities for youth to participate in **everyday aspects of the community** through employment, social activities, and volunteering; and opportunities for youth to **participate in community governance**.

According to my findings, most communities consider both types of participation to be valuable since they are included in a fairly equal number of the plans. In some cases, there is also a considerable amount of overlap between the sub-themes in the two categories. However, because of the very large amount of data I compiled, I found it necessary to provide this structure to describe my findings. In addition, these two categories enable me to highlight the differences between the potential participation opportunities communities provide to youth. Although there are exceptions to this, I found the opportunities for participation in everyday community

life are generally less formal and are not perceived to impact the community as much as participation in community governance.

Participation in Everyday Community Life:

- *Recreation and social activities* – including references to participation in activities designed for physical fitness and social interaction.
- *Employment and career preparation* – including references to job training initiatives and efforts to prepare youth for future careers.
- *Volunteering and community service* – including references to opportunities for young people to volunteer and serve others in the community.
- *Participation in media* – including references to opportunities for youth to create media messages or to advise organizations on marketing to young people.

Participation in Community Governance:

- *Community decision-making* – including references to opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making for specific programs and community initiatives.
- *Youth/student councils* – including references to the functions of existing youth councils and the opportunities for participation on youth councils.

- *Development of leadership skills* – including references to specific efforts to provide leadership skills training for youth.
- *Participation in creating the YMP* – including references to one-time and on-going opportunities for youth to participate in the creation, implementation, and evaluation of YMPs.
- *Conducting research or evaluation* – including references to opportunities for youth to evaluate existing programs and conduct research about youth issues in the community.

Table 5.1 shows the breakdown for each of these youth participation sub-themes that I identified through content analysis.

Table 5.1: Frequencies for youth participation sub-themes (N=38)

Youth Participation in Everyday Community Life	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
Recreation and social activities	35 (92%)	231	15,878
Employment and career preparation	31 (82%)	191	11,130
Volunteering and community service	21 (55%)	86	5,842
Participation in media	5 (13%)	17	833
Total	37 (97%)	525	33,683

Youth Participation in Community Governance	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
Participation in decision-making	29 (76%)	225	16,674
Youth/student councils	27 (71%)	96	6,477
Development of leadership skills	24 (63%)	107	6,194
Participation in creating YMPs	21 (55%)	62	5,622
Conducting research or evaluation	5 (13%)	7	229
Total	35 (92%)	497	35,196
Total for Youth Participation	38 (100%)	1,022	68,879

In order to compare youth participation to other focus areas of the YMPs, I calculated a total for participation that included both everyday community life and community governance. I found that all 38 YMPs reference youth participation in some form.

Research shows that problems with youth participation can occur when long-term frameworks for youth participation are not established before a community project occurs (Matthews, 2003, p. 270). The fact that all of the YMPs cover youth participation in some way as part of their guiding plan for the community is a good sign. At least for one community, youth participation was already part of the **general philosophy of the community** and their YMP just reinforced and articulated it.

During an interview, I asked a staff member in Palo Alto if youth participation happened because of the YMP or if the community already thought it was important and just wrote provisions in the master plan to make it happen. The interviewee responded:

I think it kind of goes both ways. I think that this community wants to have youth input. So I do think that having a structured plan in place has helped it take place. More than in other communities. The first question that happens around here, if something is youth based is, "Well did you talk to the youth about it? Are you getting their input?" And I do think that that's really been a strong influence of the plan and the forum that is taking place and making sure the people aren't just asking but listening to what they have to say.

In the following sections, I describe how the sub-themes are addressed in the YMPs, starting with participation in everyday community life and following with participation in community governance.

Youth Participation in Everyday Community Life

According to occupational therapy literature, participation in the everyday occupations or activities of life are a vital part of human development and enable people to acquire skills and competencies and develop connections to people and places (Law, 2002, p. 640). Similarly, a longitudinal study in the southeastern United States found that consistent extracurricular activity participation in early and middle adolescence was positively linked to interpersonal competence in middle adolescence, educational aspirations in late adolescence, and educational status at age 20 for both boys and girls (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003, p. 413).

In addition, research on youth participation in activities that are both voluntary and structured found that youth often experience self-directed development, including the development of: self-knowledge, initiative, the ability to control emotions, peer relationships, the ability to work together as a team, and an understanding of the community and how it operates (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003, p. 20-24). Since researchers have acknowledged many benefits of participating in activities that are part of everyday community life, there is a benefit for communities to provide

specific opportunities for these activities to occur. Below I describe these opportunities divided into four sub-themes as they are referenced in the YMPs.

Everyday Life Sub-Theme One: Recreation and Social Activities

A relatively high number of YMPs (35 out of 38) reference opportunities for recreation and social participation. This is a broad node that was difficult to sub-divide since so many of the opportunities mentioned are either vague or include opportunities for children and youth to have both social and recreational experiences.

Although “play” is often the activity young people engage in when not in school or doing homework, and may be the equivalent of recreation and social activities, the YMPs do not often refer to “play” as a valued activity. Research shows that institutionalized, privatized, and adult-organized activities have led to a decline in children’s public play since it is not as valued and can be seen as ‘wasted’ time (Haider, 2007, p.85).

Similar to most of the sub-themes, the plans include statements about recreation and social activities ranging from very general to very specific. For example, the Albany, CA plan includes the general statement, “Develop teen weekend and evening programs that provide expanded recreational opportunities for teens.” Similarly, Pleasanton, CA includes a general recommendation, “Support programmed and

informal recreation programs and activities for children and youth of all ages and abilities enabling constructive use of time.”

Many of the plans include recommendations to increase participation in **existing social and recreational activities by making them more accessible or better advertised**. This is the case for Grand Rapids, MI’s plan, “Increase participation in community athletic and afterschool programs”. Similarly, this is true for Palo Alto, CA’s plan:

Young people need safe, healthy and fun activities where they can engage in positive behavior so that they can grow into healthy adults. Currently, there are a variety of programs and services available to the youth in the City of Palo Alto. However, youth do not always participate in these programs due to inconvenient scheduling, lack of transportation, lack of awareness, or cost of the program. New programs must be developed and implemented continuously to meet un-addressed and emerging needs, and to build on the strengths and abilities of the youth in our community.

The idea of advertising opportunities was also discussed during an interview with staff in Santa Fe, NM. The interviewee discussed the comments from a high-school student who had presented at a recent City meeting:

‘When I go to national meetings, it’s not only teenagers in Santa Fe who say there is nothing to do’. Then one of our commission members said, ‘What does that mean? What exactly would teenagers want if there was something they wanted to do in Santa Fe?’ It was a great question and [the youth] said, ‘Things to do on Friday and Saturday nights that are engaging and are for specific groups of teenagers. Because teenagers are getting on their cell phones and texting to find out where the next party is. So if there could be a teen event at different places around town on those nights that would help.’ And we have heard that before. The other thing he said was, ‘There are lots of

things going on in town and kids don't necessarily know about them.' From those two comments there are things that we know we can work on.

Many communities also explicitly recommend that recreation and social activities are **available to children and youth of different ages and abilities or who may live in different parts of the community**. For example, Thousand Oaks, CA focuses on meeting multiple developmental needs of youth. "Improve and increase youth opportunities, programs and activities (recreational, entertainment, cultural, social, and educational, etc.) to safely and appropriately meet a variety of enrichment and developmental needs of Thousand Oaks youth." Temecula, CA focuses on providing activities for all ages and abilities, "Offer organized activities, athletic opportunities, services, and classes geared toward youth of all ages and abilities that change with youth's evolving interests and that inspire new levels of youth collaboration across interests and cultures." And Hampton, VA focuses on providing activities in every neighborhood:

Neighborhoods are usually communities that house all different ages of people - young, middle-aged, and elderly. However, many neighborhoods do not offer many activities that lend themselves to the interests of the teenage generation. There are currently four community centers throughout several of the neighborhoods in Hampton, but most of their programs are geared towards younger children, such as daycare, arts and crafts, and sports camps for those young ages. While these community centers do employ teenagers to help staff the centers, there are little to no recreational opportunities for teenagers in the neighborhoods. While working in their neighborhood is an admirable job, and an excellent way to begin making money, teens need a place to 'hang out' with their own peers, without judgmental adults and/or fear of being accused of loitering.

Some communities such as Santa Clarita, CA, also provide a brief rationale for why it is important to offer recreational or social participation opportunities:

Participating in recreational opportunities provides teens with great benefits, such as physical, social, and emotional wellness. The community would like to see more recreational opportunities be provided, such as more swimming pools, longer pool hours, and water parks. Other suggestions for recreational opportunities and facilities include: another skateboard park, more community sports centers, and places for kids to work out. One of the most common concerns voiced by the youth participants was boredom and a general lack of things to do. Many requested organized activities, such as festivals, game nights, sports leagues, and a variety of other specific programs. Likewise, adult participants often expressed concerns about youth and teens just 'hanging out and getting into trouble,' and suggested expanding organized activities as a key solution.

Several communities include specific recommendations for **improving participation in recreation and social activities**. For example, Albany, CA focuses on specific holidays and special events, “Provide safe activities for youth during Halloween, New Years, Homecoming, and Graduation Night through the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and other youth groups.” While Claremont, CA focuses on one particular place, “Develop additional activities and outreach that broaden the appeal of the Youth Activity Center.” So also does Sierra Madre, CA, “Provide more concerts, plays and movies, using the band shell. Parent support is necessary for these activities, as well as youth input. The Recreation Center sponsored ‘Battle of the Bands’ activities have been well received.” Alternatively, the Ho-Chunk Nation focuses on the type of activity (physical) that is offered. “On a daily basis, the Youth Services Program will offer physical activity for 30 minutes.”

Some communities also **propose further research** or to use a more comprehensive plan for providing recreation opportunities. For example, Newport News, VA, recommends, “The Commission on Youth will explore and develop strategies with the Newport News Department of Parks and Recreation and other appropriate community organizations to increase recreational opportunities for youth.” And Lakewood, OH:

GOAL #1: Develop a comprehensive recreation plan for Lakewood.

Strategy #1: Study the governance structure and administration of recreation programs and facilities.

Strategy #2; Work with the Board of Recreation, YMCA, and other public, private, nonprofit, and civic organizations to create a comprehensive recreation plan.

Strategy #3: Use the data collected to determine recreational needs and to create recreation opportunities.

Everyday Life Sub-Theme Two: Employment and Career Preparation

The next most frequent sub-theme includes references to youth employment and career preparation, referred to in 31 out of 38 YMPs. This theme could also be described on its own outside of youth participation, since simply having a job does not necessarily equate to participating in community life. However, many of the master plans described employment and career preparation as a way for youth to develop skills and become more productive and contributing members of the community.

For many youth, **jobs are an integral part of their education** and provide a context through which they can learn social skills and develop a sense of responsibility and independence. This awareness is presented in the Pleasanton, CA YMP:

The limited career development and employment opportunities prevent Pleasanton adolescents ages 13-17 and young adults 18-19 from working and developing independence from their family. Youth-oriented jobs and internships can provide an opportunity for youth to gain responsibility, career skills, and economic freedom.

San Jose, CA also recognizes that **young people with career goals and job skills can better contribute to and participate in their community**, “Leadership, educational, technological and career support services will strengthen individuals and communities by providing teenagers with experiences that increase their skill competencies and their desire to be positively involved with their schools and communities.” As does Roanoke, VA:

The ultimate focus area of youth employment goes far beyond young people having money in their wallets. In fact, this is secondary in the long-run to young people having life-enhancing work opportunities that promote work ethic, skills and abilities, career and financial planning, personal enhancement and the opportunity to have adult role models and other adult relationships.

Many YMPs call for **better collaboration between businesses or business groups and the city or county government**. For example, Claremont, CA recommends the development of a collaborative:

Develop a community youth employment collaborative (School district, City, Chamber of Commerce, RoP, etc.) to develop new programs and coordinate

youth job training, employment internships, career days, and youth employment, money management and support existing programs that have shown sustainability and develop new programs where gaps exist.

Similarly, Thousand Oaks, CA also recommends a **city-wide system to address youth employment**, “Collaborate with schools, colleges and universities, major municipal institutions, businesses, civic and faith-based groups to prepare youth for employment.” This is also true for Chesapeake, VA, “Encourage more partnerships between educational institutions and private businesses/industry to create internship programs and work opportunities for youth (to include those that earn school credit).”

Communities such as La Canada Flintridge, CA recommend **job readiness training and skill development**, “Coordinate seminars by local community groups (even local area colleges and universities) to prepare youth for future and immediate employment.” Several other communities recommended career preparation, including Brighton, CO, “Create a local business leader mentoring program that will match individual local business leaders with young people who are interested in exploring that line of work.” And Grand Rapids, MI focuses on college preparation:

Exposure to secondary education needs to be integrated throughout elementary, middle and high school and within afterschool programs. We know that college is a critical component in securing the good jobs of tomorrow. Students from kindergarten through high school need support, preparation and encouragement to be college-ready. Children should be exposed to career planning early in life. One promising initiative is the Kent College Access Network plan for “first generation” students who have not considered college as an option. All youth need experience with emerging

career fields and job growth opportunities. Students need the support of adults and peers who will guide and nurture their post-secondary aspirations. Sixty-six percent of our teens reported they were going on to college, yet too many of these same young people are left on their own to navigate what is needed to get into college or to secure a job. Every adult who has contact with a young person should talk about future aspirations and, when possible, help that person understand the college preparation process. Everyday conversations go a long way towards helping a teen become more hopeful about their future.

Similar to recommendations regarding publicizing youth recreational and social activities, **publicizing job opportunities** was important to some communities. For example, Omaha, NE recommends this without specifying the format that should be used to accomplish it.

Communicate career opportunities and pathways. A public information and communication campaign should be developed to disseminate information on local career opportunities and the education and training requirements of entering and getting ahead in those career areas. This information could be packaged and distributed in ways that would help recruit and motivate disadvantaged students to pursue locally viable and important career pathways; enlist business and community sponsors to participate in mentoring, internship, and other support programs; and increase the visibility of and access to high school and college transition programs.

Lakewood OH, more specifically recommends the creation of a database, “To link vocational training to the real-world economy, develop a database of the types of jobs businesses, industries, and the social service sector need filled.” Brighton, CO does this as well:

A job bank database for matching youth with local employment opportunities exists. It's proactive and aggressive as opposed to passive. Young people seeking to improve their opportunities are realistically coached at the One-

Stop Center or at the mentor's place of business.

In addition, Hampton, VA's YMP highlights a variety of ways that youth want to find out about jobs in the community:

At a Youth Commission forum held in 1999, the youth were asked what would make finding a job easier. Below are some of the answers that were given, along with more updated information.

- *Place a bulletin board in schools and/or the mall with a list of jobs that are of interest to teens.*
- *Have job fairs (either in the schools or other frequented teen areas) at least twice a year.*
- *Place an insert in the Daily Press that lists jobs that are of interest to teens, as well as in the school newspapers.*
- *Utilize the Youth Commission's website to advertise job opportunities.*

Finally, a few communities are also employing innovative solutions to the youth employment issue. For example Grand Rapids, MI has a workplace readiness program called WorkKeys:

Our business community has endorsed the WorkKeys career readiness certificate as a meaningful indicator of workplace preparedness. This certificate denotes Bronze, Silver and Gold level attainment on core subject areas. The majority of high schools within the Kent Intermediate School District require students to take this assessment of the foundational and real-world skills employers seek. Job-readiness assessments serve as an additional opportunity for educators to strategize on methods that bridge gaps between proficiency and employability. We must ensure that all students receive at least a Silver Level attainment on this test so that they are prepared to enter the workforce.

Omaha, NE recommends a redesign of their Career Academy High School:

Explore a Career Academy high school redesign strategy. Career Academies are a highly effective high school reform model. They combine a rigorous

academic curriculum with career and technical education in small learning communities within high schools. Building on existing strong relationships, local school districts, MCC, and 4-year colleges will need to work together with business and other community partners to create coherent and effective educational pathways to viable careers and to help students make progress toward their career goals. The Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, in collaboration with local schools, businesses, and public and private social service agencies, is currently considering the Career Academy Innovation Community model. This is a viable model for the community-wide collaboration that is needed. Again, additional support for teachers may be needed.

And Portland/Multnomah County includes a recommendation to expand opportunities for youth entrepreneurship:

Expand Economic Opportunity Initiative to include youth entrepreneurship. There are thirteen youth employment programs but no youth entrepreneurship programs. The main obstacle to working with youth is that this program requires a very serious three-year commitment, and many young people have not yet decided what they want to do with their lives. However, there is the possibility to add a youth entrepreneurship component to the Economic Opportunity Initiative.

Although YMPs emphasize youth employment and job preparation as important ways to engage youth in the community, there is little current research on this topic.

In the next section, I discuss volunteering and community service.

Everyday Life Sub-Theme Three: Volunteering and Community Service

Volunteering and community service was the third sub-theme I identified within the youth participation in everyday community life node. Although volunteering is often

associated with civic engagement, it can also be completely separate from community governance. Therefore, I chose to include it in the everyday community life category instead of the community governance category. Slightly more than half of the YMPs (21 out of 38) referred to this sub-theme.

Many of the 21 communities recognize the value of community service both to the community and to the children and youth who engage in a specific action. Research also highlights these benefits. For example, research conducted in seven countries, including the United States, found that youth who engage in volunteer work are more likely to identify with the common good of the community (Flanagan et al., 1998, p. 471). In addition, many of the benefits mentioned by the communities with YMPs include developing a sense of individual empowerment and skills. For example, the YMP for Sierra Madre, CA includes the recommendation, “Organize a service group of young people to develop their sense of belonging and demonstrate their value to the community. The community will not give its complete support or involvement if young people do not make an attempt to reciprocate.”

Communities such as La Plata County, CO include a statement about the importance of providing multiple levels of service. They refer to community service during short-term activities as the first level of community engagement for youth.

The myriad volunteer activities available to young people to be helpful and serve others constitute the first pathway of the triangle. Most communities/schools/organizations have a host of these opportunities, scattered throughout their systems/institutions. They are short-term, often “hands on,” activities requiring few specific skills and minimal training. The projects and tasks pathway can offer an almost unlimited variety of options for participation with specific issues that offer a positive experience to individuals. Young people participating in projects, tasks and service can participate in trail maintenance projects, pass out campaign literature, provide support to school teachers and administrators, collect canned goods for a food drive, conduct surveys, organize neighborhood clean-ups and recruit their peers to get involved. They are making a difference by giving of their time and talent or providing a needed service to others. And while they are engaged they are learning new skills and building positive relationships.

A few communities, such as Albany, CA, recommend **service-learning opportunities** in school as a way to get young people involved in community service, “Provide youth with service learning opportunities and recognition for actions that serve the community.”

Some communities recognize a need for **raising the awareness of service opportunities**. For example La Canada Flintridge, CA, recommends a volunteer fair, “Offering an annual or quarterly Community Service Fair to educate middle and high school students about the various volunteer programs and giving them the option of signing up for community service activities.” Newport News, VA recommends the use of Public Service Announcements:

The Office on Youth Development will distribute Public Service Announcements about internships, employment, and volunteer service opportunities and mentorship needs to the Daily Press and other media

outlets in order to encourage participation and support from businesses, community organizations and local government.

Other communities refer to **specific incentives for service** and ways to recognize the children and youth who participate in service. Palo Alto, CA's YMP includes as recommendation for celebrating youth volunteers. And El Paso County, CO recommends singling out an exceptional youth, as "Teen Volunteer of the Year". Albany, CA recommends using "Community Money", local currency that could be used only in the City in exchange for community services. Manchester, CT promotes having a volunteerism month:

Volunteerism month. Create an annual school-centered service project that supports 'friendly competition' each year during Volunteerism Month (April). This friendly competition could be between schools or between grade levels within a school. The recommendation is for friendly competitions because all volunteer efforts should be recognized and celebrated. But since our culture is so geared to competition the effort will probably gain greater attention if someone is selected 'the winner'. This should be for both public and private schools. Non-profit organizations could also enter this project.

Although research has shown that a family ethic of social responsibility can have a powerful role in attaching youth to the idea of improving their society and helping their country (Flanagan et al., 1998, p. 471), I did not find significant support of this in the YMPs. However, the issue of adult relationships with children and youth is outside the scope of this dissertation and is an area for future research.

Everyday Life Sub-Theme Four: Participation in Media

As a form of media, the Internet has been the focus of recent research on civic engagement. For example, scholars suggest that digital media can provide young people tools to build a social and personal identity, but specifically how those tools can lead to the development of social capital and civic engagement is still open to debate (Bennett, 2008, p. 8).

Youth can also create digital stories, short two to five minute videos about their experiences and/or opinions of their community, as a way to participate in media production. I have personally facilitated digital storytelling projects with diverse groups of youth, including Latino high-school students and teen mothers, and have seen the benefits it can provide. For example, some of the teen mothers created digital stories highlighting the fact that even though they have babies, they want to be treated with respect in the community. Creating a digital story about their personal situation in the community gave many of them a way to communicate their frustrations and reflect on what they would like from their community.

Through the creation, presentation, and discussion of digital stories, youth can have a voice and express what they think as young people. Some of the digital stories were shared with city council members and other city leaders. The stories provided a less

intimidating way to share a personal story with the community and created an opportunity to start a dialogue between city officials and young people.

Yet, despite its potential and the extensive use of electronic media by youth today, youth participation in media creation is only a minor sub-theme, referred to in just five out of 38 YMPs. When I compared the dates that these five plans were completed, I did not find a relationship between how recently the plan was created and the inclusion of youth participation in the creation of media messages.

I included youth in media in the “participation in everyday community life” category. However, since research has explored the potential of digital media for civic engagement and community development, and some communities do mention similar objectives, it also overlaps with the “youth participation in community governance” node.

In relation to youth and media, Palo Alto, CA and Charleston, SC, focus on **building youth skills in media production as a medium for youth voice**. Palo Alto’s plan states, “Collaborated with MPACC to enable teens to develop skills in the media that will teach them how to express their thoughts to the public”, and Charleston’s plan recommends, “Increase opportunities for youth to speak out through media outlets - i.e. local newspapers, TV Stations, and radio stations.” Portland/Multnomah County,

OR's report for their Children's Bill of Rights includes an explanation about why youth are well suited to participating in media:

Youth are very tech-savvy and are helpful in creating media tools like websites. They are also quick to learn computer and phone systems and are therefore great 'front-line' employees.

Today's youth are the first generation that has grown up entirely on computers. Today's young people are knowledgeable about the internet, word processing, digital cameras, video technology and more. Many youth use the computer for more than homework; they participate in the numerous social networking sites that have been created in the last five years. Youth listen to music and chat about friends, school and homework on websites like MySpace, YouTube and Facebook. As a result, many youth have experience in web design and layout.

Youth are fast becoming ideal support for updating and designing web pages, especially sites that are geared towards other young people. As youth are more likely to seek information about City programs and services online than in any other format, the City could use youth to assist in the development of 'youth friendly' websites. By helping youth create websites about City programs and services for other youth, young people would be more likely to read and use the information.

A few communities focus on specific media outlets such as television, newsletters, and websites. For example, La Canada Flintridge, CA recommends training for youth in television, "Collaborate with the Institutes for the 21st Century on the development of a cable television broadcasting production program to train youth on the technical aspects of cable television broadcasting". And Palo Alto, CA recommends a youth-produced television show and documentary, "Recreation staff and Youth Council Advisor are investigating the opportunity for a Youth- produced TV show". TAB

[teen advisory board] will work to create a documentary educating parents and teens, highlighting fun and interesting activities for youth in our community”.

Although many communities either have a website for youth or propose it in their plan, Charleston, SC and Portland/Multnomah County, OR are two communities that **specifically recommend the website be designed by youth**. For example

Portland/Multnomah County, OR includes the following recommendation in its plan:

The website portion of the Youth Civic Engagement Project would involve creating a ‘youth-friendly’ way for young people to learn about current opportunities. In collaboration with PortlandOnline, it would be developed by youth media interns and supervised by the City of Portland. It would contain regularly updated information about youth engagement opportunities in the various bureaus, such as internships, jobs, and volunteer opportunities, as well as descriptions of the bureaus’ work in an easy-to-read format. The website would also contain copies of the curriculum used for the civics peer education training as a resource for schools. Bureaus and government officials would use the site to post ideas for youth feedback and directly seek out youth involvement in meetings or committees. The primary goal of the website would be to create an easy, clear and accessible way for youth to become more engaged in the areas of local government that directly impact their lives. At the same time, it will be a resource for teachers looking to educate their students about government and for City staff wanting to hire youth.

As a theme only referred to by five communities, youth participation in media is not at the forefront of youth participation. However, as the use of technology becomes more commonplace and additional research is conducted on youth in media, this is likely to change.

In the next section I describe how YMPs address youth participation in community governance.

Youth Participation In Community Governance

Although there are many overlaps between youth participating in everyday community life and youth participating in community governance, I purposefully separated the participation opportunities into these two categories in order to highlight the differences. In the following sections, I focus on youth participation in the governance of a community, an area that has been the focus of a significant amount of recent research.

A key paradigm across these sub-themes is **respect for children and youth for their ability to contribute**. Many plans include explicit statements expressing this idea. For example, Sierra Madre, CA recommends, “Include and Recognize Youth: Treat youth with respect, give them opportunities to contribute, and recognize them for positive actions”. And Roanoke, VA’s plan includes the goal, “Community Values Youth, Young people know how important they are to the City. Policies reflect the high value the community places on youth in every aspect of city life”. Despite these general statements in the plans, research has shown that youth do not feel adults listen to them about their views on the community (Driskell, Fox, & Kudva, 2008, p. 2831; Elsley, 2004, p. 160). Therefore, a focus on youth participation in decision-making

needs to be more than empty rhetoric and should lead to specific outcomes.

Research literature highlights recommendations for accomplishing successful youth participation in community governance. For example, in California, the Y-PLAN (Youth – Plan, Learn, Act, Now!) project engaged high-school youth in community development projects (McKoy & Vincent, 1997, p. 389). Researchers with Y-PLAN identified three main criteria for a successful engagement process: 1) authentic problems that engage a diverse group of stakeholders; 2) adult and youth participants who share the decision-making responsibilities; and 3) successful projects that are sustainable for both individual and institutional (school) participation.

Researchers in the UK used case studies to discover the extent to which the project *Democracy through Citizenship* “strengthened democracy through the encouragement and support of active citizenship in young people”. The project team employed the following definition of active citizenship, “young people working within the context of – and hoping to learn about, and develop further – a pluralistic democracy” (Davies et al., 2009, p. 26). One of the outcomes experienced by this project included a cultural change in the “authority around citizenship and consultation and engagement of young people” (Davies et al., 2009, p. 35). The project used five key strategies to promote participation:

- Using high-level interpersonal skills to create a positive process of participation;
- Targeting key decision makers in order to gather support;
- Acting very carefully in relation to controversial issues;
- Maintaining realistic commitments; and
- Focusing on catalysts for change (p. 36).

In the following sections I describe youth participation in community governance related to community decision-making, youth/student councils, the development of leadership skills, creating the YMPs, and conducting research in the community.

Participation in Community Governance Sub-Theme One: Participation in Decision-Making

Youth participation in decision-making was the most frequently included sub-theme, referenced by 29 of 38 YMPs. Many communities expressed general support for youth having a voice in decisions that affect them. For example, the YMP for Albany, CA states, “Youth should be involved in the planning and implementing of programs that affect their lives”. Brighton, CO, Newport News, VA, Roanoke, VA, and Palo Alto, CA also include language in their YMPs to support this idea:

The Youth Commission recommends that when decisions are made by the city and schools that impact young people, they should be afforded the right and opportunity to contribute their insights to those decisions. This is the number

one recommendation of the Educational Excellence committee and is supported by Youth Development principles and practices. – Brighton, CO

The City of Newport News will promote and support the active participation of young people in the planning and decision-making processes within the community. - Newport News, VA

Youth as Resources: Young people take on useful roles in the community. The City seeks out young people's perspectives and opinions in planning for the future and making policy decisions about how the City's resources will be used. - Roanoke, VA

Promoting the engagement and involvement of youth in our community should include hosting a youth forum for discussions, appointing youth to local boards or commissions, and the continuation of a youth council and advisory board for middle and high school youth. These opportunities may only reach a small percentage of a city's youth, but they make a powerful statement to all young people and adults that youth are valued members of the community. Several of these elements can be combined to create a multi-tier framework for youth participation and involvement, allowing large numbers of youth to become involved in civic activities. Young people themselves will help to define and refine the vision for youth participation and involvement in our community and local government. - Palo Alto, CA

Sierra Madre, CA also includes language about why children and youth should be included in decision-making:

Children and youth are not only future leaders and workers; they are current resources with energy and creativity to offer the community. They should be involved in the planning and implementing of all programs that affect their lives.

Although YMPs generally support the idea of youth participation in decision-making, questions of how and in what context youth participate are important. Research in

Scotland showed that “dynamic and creative engagement” approaches were likely to be more effective to engage young people (Elsley, 2004, p.161). Other research highlights the emergence of situations in which young people showed interest in different areas of concern related to “social movements” but saw them as unconnected to government (Bennett, 2008, p. 8).

Although “dynamic and creative” is open to interpretation, one way that communities are engaging youth in decision-making is through **youth forums or youth summits** to identify and discuss important community issues. Hampton, VA recommends a youth forum, during which youth can learn from youth in other communities, “Host a region-wide youth conference to discuss methods of youth engagement and possible coordination between multiple cities”. And Sierra Madre, CA recommends a monthly youth forum that also includes entertainment:

A regularly scheduled open forum (i.e. monthly) that allows young people to voice their concerns, ideas, and “wants”, perhaps moderated by a Youth Advisory Council. Begin with an informal meeting in the park, at the bandshell, with entertainment to follow.

While youth forums involve a large number of youth, **youth membership on adult boards**, another technique for youth decision-making recommended in many YMPs, only enables the participation of a select few. Research has noted that in cases when one or a few youth participate on a board or commission, it does very little to advance youth engagement, as it does not create access for large numbers of youth to decision-

making opportunities, nor does it effectively change the views of adults who do not see youth as valuable citizens (Carlson, 2006, p. 100). Further, the top-down consultation approach to participation, in which youth are involved as individual information providers to decision-makers, does little to give legitimacy and authority to shared decision-making processes since youth are not participating in the whole process (Vromen, 2008, p. 3). When youth are invited to participate on a committee, adults often expect the youth to adopt adult practices. Without training for both adults and youth about what to expect, youth are more likely to become non-participants. And when decision-making follows formal channels, such as through boards and commissions, the lack of immediacy and the cumbersome nature of decision-making processes can provide little incentive for young people to get involved (Matthews, 2003, p. 266). Youth in Scotland did not view traditional board representation as necessarily appropriate for young people (Elsley, 2004, p.161).

Yet, despite these research findings, many of the YMPs promote youth membership on adult boards. For example, Albany CA states, "Organizations should include youth on their boards and planning committees and provide training and assistance for their youth members". In addition, at least eight other communities recommend youth participation on community boards and commissions as a way to get meaningful youth participation in decision-making. Portland/Multnomah County, OR's plan states, "Engaging youth on advisory boards and committees will offer a unique

perspective and generate new insight and suggestions. It will ensure a more accurate representation of public opinion and teach lasting civic engagement skills”.

Claremont, CA’s plan states, “Enhance efforts to establish a community-wide policy that all committees, tasks groups, etc. should have youth representation, where appropriate”. And Pleasanton, CA’s plan states a similar recommendation, “Increase opportunities for children and youth representation and involvement on City commissions and business and non-profit organization committees”.

During an interview with a staff member in Brighton, CO, I discovered that although it was not a specific strategy identified in their YMP, the youth commission, which was created in part to accomplish the goals of the YMP, worked to get youth representation on city boards.

The kids [youth commission members] came up with the idea that they wanted to have youth serve on city boards. So they went and made presentations to about three different city boards, city councils, and presented some background and history about why they think it's important, and what youth can bring. They listed some other cities and counties that allow youth to serve on their boards. So they did a lot of research for it. And about a year into the process, the city council approved to put two youth on about four different city boards. And we just started that in January of this year. So youth have a voice on city boards.

Three communities recognize some of the operational and logistical difficulties when youth participate on adult-oriented boards. For example, Portland/Multnomah County, OR highlights some of these difficulties:

A primary method of public involvement in local government is through advisory boards and committees. While youth are the recipients of a substantial number of services and programs related to the work of these groups, there are very few opportunities for youth to serve on them. Although it would be ideal to have youth representation on all advisory boards and councils pertaining to local government, the YPAs recognize that this is not feasible at this time.

Youth are often in school during the workday, making participation difficult. Youth and adults will also require support and training so that the youth will be engaged in a meaningful way. Advisory boards and committees will have to put effort into finding ways to have direct youth involvement and allow youth to have same influence and responsibility as other members.

Similarly, Hampton, VA, recognizes the limited impact of including youth on city boards. “Unfortunately, space is often limited on boards and commissions, allowing only a few young people to serve, so a very small percentage of the youth population actually experiences this form of civic engagement”.

Charleston, SC and Portland/Multnomah County, OR include recommendations for dealing with some of the difficulties highlighted in research. For example, Charleston, SC recommends providing a mechanism to ensure that existing community boards are able to solicit youth input and recognizes the need to educate youth on how best to communicate with adult boards, “Educate youth on how to effectively voice their concerns in a public forum, such as a School Board or a City Council meeting”. In contrast, Portland/Multnomah County, OR recommends making adult-oriented meetings, often experienced with boards and commissions, more

accessible to youth.

Explore ways to make budget meetings more accessible for youth. Youth interviewed by the youth program aides reflected that they felt left out of the budgeting process because 'it was too hard to understand what was going on.' The youth stated that the meetings used words intended for people 'on the inside.' Budget meetings were viewed as 'intimidating' because there were far more adults than youth in attendance.

These difficulties were also expressed during my interview with a staff member in Santa Fe, NM regarding to its Commission for Children and Youth, currently an adult board.

...it's something we struggled with in the early days of the commission. We struggled to keep youth appointed to the commission. We had them appointed, but it was hard for them to come and the meetings were not particularly engaging for them. It was a struggle. We had a healthy lifestyles task force, which has youth on it, but we couldn't get them to come. I think it was an adult type of a meeting, that wasn't tailored to youth. We now have a mayor's youth advisory board.

Because of the discrepancies between the research on this topic and what YMPs are promoting, there is a need for additional research in the United States context. Since some communities have already established the practice of youth membership on adult community boards, it should be possible to determine if that format facilitates youth participation in community decision-making.

A similar format for youth participation in community governance recommended by YMPs is the creation or support of a youth council with primarily youth members. I

created a separate sub-theme for this concept and describe it in the following section.

Participation in Community Governance Sub-Theme Two:

Youth/Student Councils

Twenty-seven of the 38 communities referenced a youth or student council as a means of youth participation in community governance. Some communities recommend the **establishment of a youth council**. For example, the Ho-Chunk Nation recommends, “By April 1, 1999, the Department of Social Services will work to establish and ‘Unity Certify’ a Youth Council in each community in order for each Youth Council to be able to cast an individual vote”. Diamond Bar, CA also recommends the development of a youth council:

Develop and establish an ongoing Youth Leadership Board (YLB) as a part of the Collaborative. The YLB will be diverse in its representation with regard to age, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and geographic location. The YLB should encourage youth of all abilities to provide opportunities for the development of leadership skills and civic engagement. The governance of the YLB will be determined by the community.

Manchester, CT recommends the creation of youth councils, but refers to them as youth leadership groups that will work on a neighborhood basis instead of on a city-wide basis.

Youth leadership groups for the neighborhood-based centers. Each neighborhood-based center should have a Youth Leadership Group that works with the adults in the pilot center and its quadrant to plan, create, implement and assess all aspects of the center. Members should reside in the quadrant and be representative of that quadrant’s diversity. They should be

between 13 and 21 and they should receive the training and support they will need to be effective. Their primary responsibility is to set the tone within the center and the quadrant of expected youth behaviors and responsibilities. The neighborhood-based center's Director will provide staff support for these groups.

La Canada Flintridge, CA already had a community youth council and other youth boards prior to the creation of its YMP and includes the recommendation for the establishment of a council with representation from other youth committees, “Establish a ‘Council of Youth Councils’ within the community to include at least one representative from each of the City’s many youth groups to discuss common interests and opportunities for collaboration”. Similar to this idea of collaboration between youth groups, several communities recommend the coordination or collaboration between youth and adult councils. For example, Northern Fair Oaks, Unincorporated Redwood City, CA recommends, “Develop a connection between the youth and parent commissions and the coordinating body”. Oakley, CA’s plan includes a similar recommendation, “Appoint Youth Council Executive Members to be a liaison to City Council. Appoint a City Council member to report to Youth Council”. And Thousand Oaks, CA recommends, “Youth Commission and ad hoc YMP Committee should meet on an ongoing basis with representatives of policy making bodies such as Conejo Recreation and Park District, Conejo Valley Unified School District and City of Thousand Oaks to assure joint planning, coordination and discussion of youth-focused policies, programs and services”.

Other communities that had existing youth councils prior to the creation of their YMP recommend **changes that will allow additional youth participation**. For example, Oakley, CA recommends, “Increase Oakley Youth Advisory Council to include 21 spots, and include youth entering 6th grade to increase knowledge of the program, maintaining a consistent 21 council members”. Temecula, CA also recommends an increase in membership, as well as scope, “Expand the Teen Council’s scope and membership and elevate its prominence in providing continuous input to city leadership about youth issues and opportunities. Appoint a broad range of youth and teens with varying interests, abilities, and backgrounds”.

Although most of the youth councils described in this section include primarily youth members, some communities set up youth commissions made up of adults who work on children- and youth-related projects or initiatives. And communities such as Grand Rapids, MI, recommend the creation of a youth commission that includes both adults and youth:

Create a council for child and youth outcomes. Track and organize community efforts and data over time. Unanimously recommended by Ready by 21? Summit attendees, a strong accountability council or board is needed to annually review and reflect on the big picture outcomes and indicators for children and youth. Council or board participation could include youth, parents, regional mayors, the chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners, chairs of community collaborations, educators, the West Michigan Strategic Alliance, health and human services and representatives from the business and arts communities. A strong community effort is needed

to track measurements and to organize efforts over time. The Dashboard and survey tools are extremely useful and, when collectively harnessed, can greatly streamline efficiencies and efforts.

Similarly, during its master planning process, Brighton, CO established a 26-member youth commission, with six of those members being adults.

It [the YMP] also established that the Youth Commission's membership will include 26 residents of Brighton; 20 high school-aged students, four young adults between the ages of 20 and 30, and two adults – one School Board member and one City Council member. City Council also charged the Youth Commission with the responsibility of working with the Youth Resources Coordinator and Master Plan Consultant in the creation of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan.

I discovered through interviews some of the other efforts that youth commissions have accomplished or are working on. In an interview, a staff member in Santa Clarita, CA also discussed how their youth advisory committee participated in the creation process of their YMP and accomplished other efforts in the community.

The plan was kind of driven by the city's youth advisory committee, Visions in Progress. So they definitely played a role in the YMP process. They are still a very active group today. There's a city staff member that coordinates with other city departments and they meet regularly to give updates from different city divisions to see where youth might be able to participate in decision-making. One of the examples that I recall, but I don't have the details on it, is our transit division. The youth advisory committee played a big role in helping them, I don't want to say create schedules but, provide schedules that accommodate teens, creating a bus pass and they did some other things with the transit division. They played a direct role in that.

Similarly, a staff member in Brighton, CO discussed what their youth council is working on and the positive reception they have received from community leaders.

We do presentations to city council probably three or four times a year. Either about ideas that we have that we want to put before them or an update of our goals that we are working on, or just stuff like that. Recently, they just went before city council and they wanted to change some of the ordinances that the city set for us. They wanted to change some of the age restrictions for the adults that serve on the board, and they wanted to change... we didn't have any positions on our commission that serve as alternates, just some things like that. So they went and presented to city council and got it voted on, which I think is great and it helps the kids see that their work is meaningful and it actually gets things done. When city council has to vote and approve things that they want to do. We definitely have city council's ear and we have the ear of the mayor and they really are very, very supportive of us and that makes it a hundred times easier. Because we've seen a lot of commissions that don't have the support of city council or their mayor and they just struggle and struggle and struggle to really change anything or to be a voice in their community. So that is definitely something we have going for us.

Yet, despite the support for youth councils and the prevalence of them in YMPs as formats for participation in community governance, available research findings are mixed and do not involve youth councils in the United States. Scholars have argued that approaches for consultation, such as youth councils, **are exclusive and are accessible only to well-resourced youth** who have been encouraged to participate and become leaders (Vromen, 2008, p. 5). A study in Australia that looked at inclusion and diversity in government decision-making recommended limiting the processes that call for representative young people and to encourage youth from diverse backgrounds to speak from their own experiences rather than 'represent' other young people (Bell, Vromen, & Collin, 2008, p. 13). In Ireland, a strategic case study with an advisory group of youth revealed that the group was continually asked to be

responsive to and descriptive of other youth, although the youth themselves stated they did not represent the views of other youth (Faulkner, 2009).

In other research, youth expressed mixed feelings about youth councils as formats for consultation, exhibiting a split between youth who participated in youth councils and held generally positive opinions of them, and youth who did not participate in them and held generally negative views of them (Stafford et al. 2003, p. 368). The study revealed that youth thought adults made it easy to participate through encouragement, making space for youth to speak and listening to them and that there are significant benefits for youth who participate, including the chance to get to know other youth and enjoying the experience. However, youth were also critical of the fact that councils often involve small numbers of youth who do not really represent young people as a whole, are often selected rather than voted in, have no accountability, do not accomplish much, and can be tokenistic. In order for communities to be confident in recommending youth councils as a format for youth participation in community governance, additional research is needed.

Next, I describe the sub-theme that includes references to the development of leadership skills.

Participation in Community Governance Sub-Theme Three:

Development of Leadership Skills

Research focusing on the major trends in leadership development found that if the basic characteristic of a democracy is citizen participation, then all people in a community must be available as leaders to address issues that arise (Foster, 2000, p. 89). Over half of the YMPs (24 out of 38) reflect this idea and reference the importance of providing opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills.

In a New Zealand study with high school students in urban and rural communities, researchers found that most youth were interested in sharing their views with local government but were unsure how to coordinate with government officials to facilitate their participation (Nairn, Sligo, & Freeman, 2006, p. 263). Essentially, they lacked the knowledge and skill to work within an adult structure. Research in the UK found that young people are offered 'power' but essentially have very little of it since decisions and negotiations often take place by adults when young people are not present. In addition, the capacity building needed for youth to obtain self-esteem and a sense of control over their lives is time-consuming and can be outside the scope of a community regeneration project (Matthews, 2003, p. 267). Yet, scholars have encouraged the development of youth leadership skills and community planning knowledge as an important way to build capacity and enable youth to participate effectively (Checkoway, Pothukuchi & Finn, 1995, p. 137).

Rather than knowledge of community planning, the 24 communities that reference leadership development focus primarily on **teaching youth about government and providing both general and specific skill building opportunities**. Although not always explicitly stated, it is implied through recommendations that communities understand and support the idea that most youth need training in order to be successful leaders and contributors in the community. Manchester, CT expresses this idea in its plan:

Action strategy #2: Youth training.

Providing skill training so young people are prepared to be resources is a core need of a successful AYCE initiative. No young person should ever be placed in a position where he or she will fail because they weren't given the training needed to succeed. Most young people will need at least some training to be able to serve within the input and shared leadership pathways. The field has learned over time that training needs to be ongoing, both broad and specific, related to the issue being addressed and, most importantly, youth-friendly.

Hampton, VA also explains why youth need leadership skills:

Youth sharing leadership is another one of the six goals that youth believe needs to be met. Youth sharing leadership means that youth should have the ability to participate in decisions that affect them. One day, these same youth will assume leadership positions throughout the community. It is never too early to get involved in civic activities and to learn how to interact on the business and city management level. Youth should be able to help decide what their future is going to look like. Young people are able to offer a different perspective because, while adults can only guess as to what the young people are passionate or concerned about, youth sharing the leadership can bridge that gap by acting as the voice of all their peers to those who make the decisions. When given a chance to take action and gain these vital leadership skills, most people feel empowered. Young people tell

the Youth Planners that they care more about their community because they were more involved.

Communities often focus on teaching youth about how government systems work. For example, Albany, CA recommends, “Support a Youth In Government Day in conjunction with YMCA leadership program that focuses on an understanding of local government”. Similarly, Portland/Multnomah County recommends a program to teach youth about local government.

The Youth Civic Engagement Project is designed to provide education about local government directly to youth. Our research showed that there is a lack of youth-friendly materials designed to teach them about City government. Furthermore, school curriculum only covers state and national government. This has led to a lack of engagement in local government.

Other communities recommend general leadership training programs. For example, Palo Alto, CA recommends, “Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY) provide leadership training and community service internship opportunities for middle school youth”. Portland/Multnomah County, OR also recommends general youth leadership training, “Create summer youth leadership training activities. By offering summer youth leadership training opportunities, PP&R [Portland Parks and Recreation] could help find youth to participate on the teen councils at local community centers and connect them with other leadership opportunities throughout the City”. And La Plata County, CO recommends:

The creation of a training network that prepares both youth and adults to work more effectively together, building youth and adult partnerships. This network will also assist young people in obtaining the knowledge, skills and abilities they will need to be effective contributors and will also provide them with opportunities to practice these new skills while building their confidence.

Other communities focus on the **specific characteristics or skills youth need to be leaders**, such as human relations and public speaking. For example, Charleston, SC recommends, “Educate youth on how to effectively voice their concerns in a public forum, such as a School Board or a City Council meeting”.

Two communities, Manchester, CT and La Plata County, CO recommend a **comprehensive training program** that involves the creation of neighborhood colleges to support the development of leadership skills for youth. For example, Manchester, CT’s plan states:

Neighborhood Colleges are a growing strategy in cities and counties aware of the importance neighborhoods play in the wellbeing of the entire community. How often classes are offered, how many attend, and what is taught varies from community to community. However, almost all offer sessions that focus on these topics:

- *Understanding how local government is structured, how it makes its decisions, and how neighborhood leaders can effectively resource the services, supports and opportunities available within the Town (These issues are already offered within the Government Academies),*
- *How public safety systems work and how citizen/safety officer partnerships can enhance overall safety in neighborhoods (This is already offered within the Police Academy),*
- *Understanding from a neighborhood perspective how schools determine their enrollment, the curriculum and extra curricula services and opportunities, and how neighborhoods can form*

partnerships with the schools their children attend to improve educational outcomes, and

- *How the budget and finance departments are structured, how they determine their recommended budgets, and how neighborhoods can play a proactive role in budget development.*

The skill building sessions that are recommended for the Neighborhood Colleges include at a minimum:

- *How to make meetings work;*
- *How to apply conflict resolution techniques to obtain better outcomes;*
- *How to work more effectively with the multiple diversities that exist in any neighborhood*
- *How to be a good facilitator;*
- *Becoming comfortable with public speaking and how to create informative and visually stimulating presentations;*
- *How to build youth and adult partnerships that will benefit from the “gifts” of each group; and*
- *How to write a grant and/or secure other neighborhood development resources.*

Several communities also focus on **providing opportunities for youth to mentor others in the community** as a way to develop leadership skills. For example Oakley, CA’s plan includes the goal:

Area of Focus #4: Create an Excellent Leadership in Training Guide to Train Youth Mentors: An important part of Developmental Assets are those that are also needed for good work ethic. Some examples are personal responsibility, honesty, integrity, and caring for your community. So much of the work the Recreation Division does is with youth trying to develop these skills.

Similarly, Pomona, CA recommends:

Identify youth and adult leaders from the pilot neighborhoods to serve as mentors for new neighborhoods. Mentors train youth and family members as coaches to conduct neighborhood house meetings to educate and engage other community members in the Youth and Family Master Plan.

Similarly, La Plata County, CO proposes **mentorship opportunities**, “Youth and Families as Resources: [Developmentally Attentive Systems and Organizations] identifies and enlists the strengths of young people and families, offering them skill-building, support, and leadership opportunities to serve as resources and champions of thriving throughout the organization and the community”. Manchester, CT also recommends peer mentorship opportunities through an ambassador program.

The committee recommends that ambassador programs be developed throughout the community. These ambassador programs will be led by youth, but in partnership with adults. Youth Ambassador programs are driven by young people who have been provided with the necessary tools and encouragement to mobilize their peers and neighbors in support of safe and connected neighborhoods; ones which create opportunities for Manchester's children, youth and families. The Youth Ambassadors' core goals would be to ensure:

- *Adults view children and youth as important resources to a thriving neighborhood,*
- *There are enriching and safe options for children and youth during after school hours;*
- *That all children and youth in a neighborhood feel safe, and*
- *There are opportunities for young people to have a voice in the decisions being made in their neighborhood.*

In contrast, the Ho-Chunk Nation recommends **youth are mentored by community elders about leadership**, “By June 30, 2000, the Departments of Social Services and Health will establish a mentorship program matching students with elders and community leadership role models”.

In addition to the skill development formats discussed above, scholars suggest that leadership skills can be encouraged in multiple ways, including extra-curricular programs, mentoring, volunteering, and athletics (Foster, 2000, p. 90). Therefore many of the other participation opportunities I discuss in this chapter also provide leadership skills development.

In the next section, I discuss the sub-theme focused on youth participation in the creation process of the YMPs.

Participation in Community Governance Sub-Theme Four:

Participation in the Creation of YMPs

Research suggests that the participatory governance approach to policymaking should include youth in steps of the decision-making process, including setting the agenda and implementing and evaluating policies (Vromen, 2008, p. 3). Youth master planning involves setting the agenda for future work in the community regarding children and youth. Specifically, 21¹⁵ out of 38 communities aligned with this research and described how youth participated in the creation process for their YMP. Although this form of participation was often described in the YMPs as something that had already occurred and would not necessarily continue in the same way, I

¹⁵ It should be noted that for some communities, the YMP document did not include a detailed description of their creation process so there could be communities in addition to the 21 that also involved youth in that process.

included it in this section since it could be interpreted as a commitment to youth participation in community governance. For example, Palo Alto, CA recommends ongoing youth participation, “Bi-annually, the Youth Council will evaluate the YMP to determine the overall effectiveness of the action items identified in the plan to make adjustments based on the current trends and issues involving this age group”.

As I reported in Chapter Four, of the 25 communities that responded to a question in the questionnaire about stakeholder involvement, 84 percent (21 communities) reported that local youth who were not part of the youth council were involved or extremely involved in the creation of the YMP. And 81 percent (20 communities) reported that youth council members were involved or extremely involved in the creation of their YMP. This corresponds with what I identified above and shows that roughly half of the communities included youth in the creation of their YMP.

As described in the YMP documents, the majority of youth input seemed to be solicited during **focus groups with different age groups or a questionnaire that was distributed widely**. In terms of a questionnaire, many communities that focused on asset development often administered the Youth Development Survey and the Attitudes and Behavior Survey from the Search Institute. In addition, Oakley CA administered a questionnaire to middle and high school students to determine what students actually want:

To determine if there was a connection between the actual need presented by the Asset Surveys and what Middle and High School students actually want, a survey was conducted at the 2008 Cityhood Celebration regarding what types of programs they would like to have offered in Oakley.

One community, Claremont, CA, also described the **use of technology to access youth opinions**, “Youth Live Vote: an innovative outreach featured the use of electronic instantaneous voting technology to poll youth about their concerns and issues. This technology was used with all high school, intermediate school and elementary school populations”. In addition, Manchester, CT, described interviews with young people.

Another method used to ensure diversity and inclusiveness was individual interviews. The consultant and many of the committees used interviews with people important to the planning process, including young people, to better understand what it’s like to be young and living in Manchester.

Two communities also conducted planning charrettes with youth from the community. For example Brighton, CO’s plan states, “Several charrettes were conducted at both Brighton High School and Brighton Charter. A total of 130 students participated in these charrettes”. And La Plata County, CO explained, “Forty (40) middle and high school students, representing all three districts, participated in planning charrettes that explored what they perceived were the qualities needed to increase the likelihood that they were safe and healthy”.

Although I describe youth councils as formats for participation in an earlier section, some communities specifically described how **youth councils participated in the creation of their YMP**. These communities often relied on youth members to play a large role in the creation process. For example, from the timeline shown below, it is clear that the youth council in La Canada Flintridge, CA played a key role in the creation of their YMP:

March 2003- City staff and Youth Council begin process of sharing data from Youth Survey with the Community

November 2003- Youth Council approves a draft version of the Master Plan for distribution to community groups

October 2004- Youth Council modifies YMP and presented the revised plan to the City Council.

September 2005- Youth Council modifies YMP and presents their updates and the revised plan to the City Council.

Similarly, the youth commission in Roanoke, VA helped during many steps in the creation process:

Making Sense of the Data: The next step engaged Youth Commission members and interested adults in reviewing themes to identify priorities for action.

Youth Commission members worked together with adults to develop focus area statements (desired future states). A second meeting took place in which Youth Commission members reviewed the draft document and the focus areas that were outlined. They gave input on which focus areas they felt were the most important to improving life in City of Roanoke for young people. They also commented on the sequence of the focus areas and suggested what additional emphasis needed to be placed on the findings. The consultant worked with this information and existing studies, plans and reports (particularly the Developmental Assets study) to create a draft report, which was reviewed by Youth Commission members for their input and approval.

Rather than their youth council, the youth program aides in Portland/Multnomah

County, OR, evaluated existing departments and made recommendations.

The Youth Program Aides (YPAs) evaluated major youth programs and services offered through Portland City government. The research was conducted through the internet and by completing in-depth interviews with employees from City bureaus and offices. The YPAs were unable to include every single youth program and youth service in the City of Portland.

Some communities created committees, including youth members, to oversee and facilitate the development process for the YMPs. One example is Thousand Oaks, CA, “Led by the Thousand Oaks Youth Commission and guided by over 40 youth and adults who came together as the ad hoc YMP Committee”.

The issue of inclusiveness I discuss in Chapter Seven was brought up in regards to the YMP creation process in Brighton, CO. During an interview with a college student from Brighton, CO who was a high-school student during the YMP creation, I asked about her opinion of the process. She suggested that approximately 25 youth participated, but that it would have been more inclusive to include additional younger voices.

It [the YMP] was well written and all but I think everybody that was involved, had a similar background. We all came from the same perspective and we all had the same ideas. And I think we could have reached out more and gotten different perspectives that we don't have. ... I think there were more high school kids. There were a lot of races, a lot of genders, other than that I think we might have had like two middle school students. But that was about it and they were both female.

When I asked her why she thought predominately high school students participated, she suggested it may have been an issue of recruitment and students knowing what they participation meant ahead of time, “I think when they went into the schools and asked whoever wanted to be involved, they did not hand pick us but everyone who wanted to get involved did get involved”.

Next I discuss the last sub-theme in community governance related to youth conducting program evaluations and community research.

Participation in Community Governance Sub-Theme Five:

Conducting Research

Youth conducting research is the last sub-theme I identified within youth participation in community governance. Although conducting research in general may not constitute participation in community governance, the YMPs referred to youth conducting either an evaluation of community programs and making recommendations or conducting research to inform policy. Research points out that it is often assumed (rightly or wrongly) that policy created through participatory action research, which involves those affected by an issue to participate in defining and conducting the research and translating the findings into actionable steps (Penual & Freeman, 1997, p. 176), will be supported by all stakeholders and collaboratively implemented and enforced (Silverman, Taylor, & Crawford, 2008, p. 76). In addition,

research has shown benefits for the youth conducting the research. For example, youth who participated in an evaluation of participatory youth programs gained feelings of program ownership and saw themselves as social change agents. Youth who participated in the evaluation of non-participatory programs did not experience the same benefits, yet still appreciated the experience and the chance to build relationships with adults and other youth (Sabo, 2001, p. 4).

Despite these apparent benefits, youth participation in research was mentioned in only five of the 38 YMPs. And in most cases, communities only include a short statement about how this might occur. For example, the plan for Claremont, CA includes the recommendation, “Initiate programs that explore community problems and involve elementary school students in the process (value their ideas)”. And Virginia Beach, VA, states, “Youth are actively involved in the evaluation of youth opportunities. Youth opportunities have measurable outcomes”.

In addition, during my interview with a staff member in Santa Fe, NM, youth consultation during their needs assessment was brought up:

...we do include youth in our annual need assessment, so we get youth voice and hear what they think is important by giving them a list of programs that we fund. We don't ask necessarily direct questions, but they point out what programs they are familiar with and which ones they know do a good job.

Research formats such as participatory action research have been the subject of a large body of literature. Yet, if communities do not have the expertise or capacity to take on such time-consuming work, it may not be feasible for such formats to occur without the assistance of a University or non-profit partner or within the context of community governance. Further investigation of this issue is needed.

In addition to the challenges already discussed, I briefly describe two other challenges of youth participation that communities face. The staff and community members I interviewed in four different communities discussed these challenges.

Challenges Communities Face

During my interviews with staff and community members in four communities, I discussed *their thoughts on youth participation and how it is addressed in their YMP*. Two specific challenges they discussed include: **outdated action steps** if a plan had not been updated recently, and **lacking a champion in the community** who has the capacity to take ownership of the plan and ensure that it is followed. For example, a staff member in Santa Clarita also discussed the need for an update to their plan in order for it to reflect current demographic patterns in the community. And a staff member in Brighton, CO also reiterated several times that the lack of a staff member to oversee the implementation of the YMP was an impediment to accomplishing the goals.

Both of these specific challenges were also expressed in the following quote by a staff member in Palo Alto, CA:

So the plan calls a lot for youth participation, especially in terms of the action that they ask for in terms of creating youth leadership groups and youth forums and ways for youth to communicate to the general community. I think it was very well spoken to [in the plan] and I do believe that it is working. But I think the action steps are so outdated that people are asking how do we get [youth] involved and how do we get the range of communication that is taking place. But you know, like I said, the hard part is, especially when it is a citywide initiative, somebody has to own it otherwise it tends to slip through the cracks. So I don't think anyone was given the role to kind of own this plan. Now I think that was kind of a hindrance and why things slowed down in the community and stopped being so impactful. But you know, now that I've kind of done that, I think people are still willing to look to it as the guide to how we should run things. Because it speaks so highly to youth participation, there is really very little that happens in Palo Alto for students that youth input is not heavily involved with. So in that way I really do think that it's working.

Conclusion

Youth participation is an important focus area for YMPs, covered by all 38 of the YMPs I evaluated through content analysis. Within these, I identified two major categories of youth participation opportunities: **participation in everyday community life**; and **participation in community governance**. Almost all of the plans include references to opportunities in both of these categories.

Specifically, 37 YMPs include participation opportunities in everyday community life that can be described in the following sub-themes:

- *Recreation and social activities (35 plans)*

- *Employment and career preparation (31 plans)*
- *Volunteering and community service (21 plans)*
- *Participation in media (5 plans)*

Thirty-five of the YMPs refer to participation opportunities in community governance, including the following sub-themes:

- *Community decision-making (29 plans)*
- *Youth/student councils (27 plans)*
- *Development of leadership skills (24 plans)*
- *Participation in creating YMPs (21 plans)*
- *Conducting research or evaluation (5 plans)*

However, despite this wide variety of topics, there are several important issues that are not addressed or for which YMPs diverge from existing research findings. All of these issues warrant additional research.

The first topic involves **recruiting diverse youth to participate**. Although I cover the issue of diversity in detail in Chapter Seven, it is also worth mentioning here. Two of the communities that I interviewed refer to challenges in getting a wide range of youth to participate either in the creation of their YMP or in on-going participation opportunities. For example, during my interview with a staff member from Palo Alto,

CA, the interviewee described what they have done to address the challenge of recruiting youth who do not necessarily excel in academics.

[I]t's just about having relationships with as many students as possible so that when you find the opportunity arise you can get it to as many students as possible. Especially when the kids who want to get involved are not on the high-academic level, they're going to want to know about who is staffing these things and if they are going to feel comfortable there, before they are going to want to get involved. So when you already have that relationship and they kind of know the people that they're talking to, it is much easier for them to become active members. And then also having relationships with the school personnel who are obviously with these kids for the majority of the day, and everyone has to be in school, makes it a little bit easier because they can point out students who want to be active but don't have anywhere to actually get their voices heard.

Although communities mentioned a desire to recruit additional young people to participate in community opportunities, YMPs generally omitted specific strategies for addressing this critical issue. In addition, several researchers have begun to explore the question about why some youth participate and others do not (Matthews, 2001; Macpherson, 2008; Vromen & Collin, 2010). Yet, determining the best way to address the barriers that prevent certain youth from participating is an area for future research and one that communities with YMPs could help assess.

A second idea promoted by many of the YMPs that warrants additional research, is **youth participation on adult community boards**. Despite the prevalence of this idea, research primarily conducted outside the United States, raises questions whether this is an effective means of youth participation in decision-making. Specifically,

scholars ask whether the format of an adult board is appropriate and/or engaging for young people, whether youth are taught the skills and knowledge to meaningfully participate, and whether the inclusion of only a few youth on an adult board creates participation that is tokenistic (Vromen, 2008, p. 3; Matthews, 2003, p. 266; Elsley, 2004, p.161). In addition, a few of the communities with YMPs identify some of the logistical issues that this strategy presents, such as the timing of meetings and the lack of space on adult boards for significant youth representation.

Since there is little empirical research from the United States on this issue, it is an area worthy of future investigation. In addition, communities that recommend this strategy in their YMPs and that have implemented it should consider undertaking a careful assessment of the effectiveness of this trend.

A third issue is the general focus on **better communication about existing or new opportunities** available to young people. Many YMPs include this as a goal within multiple sub-themes. From jobs to social activities, children and youth need to know what is going on in the community in order to participate. And it should not be taken for granted that youth will know where to look or how to find out about what is going on. The potential of youth engagement through digital media should be explored as a possible strategy that can also address the need for better communication and marketing. Research recommends making information sources interactive, involving

the audience (the youth) in the editing and evaluation of the production of information (Bennett, 2008, p. 19). Although the popularity of the Internet and social networking sites should not be overlooked as a potential way for marketing opportunities, other means such as encouragement by mentors and respected adults should also be explored and used.

A final area that is not addressed by most YMPs includes **youth participation in unstructured activities or “hanging out”**. I also explore this idea in Chapter Six in relation to the physical environment. Research shows that youth benefit from hanging out and socializing with friends in terms of developing intrinsic motivation (Larson, 2000, p. 173) and for self-discovery and self-validation (Larson & Seepersad, 2003, p. 56). In addition, partying and hanging out without adult supervision may also provide an opportunity to have fun, relieve stress and receive positive affirmation (Larson & Seepersad, 2003, p. 57).

Yet, there is also research to indicate that unstructured activities, such as hanging out, may have undesirable effects on youth. For example, research found that Swedish boys who participated in unstructured activities, including marginally supervised, and/or non-skill oriented activities, are more likely to exhibit antisocial behavior (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000, p. 119). In addition, this same study found that boys who participated in unstructured activities were more likely to have been apprehended by

the police and were more likely to have peers who were doing poorly in school (p. 122).

Most of the participation opportunities recommended in the YMPs include structured activities. However, this is an area requiring additional research. Communities may want to conduct research with their own youth population to determine the situation specific to their community.

Despite the numerous gaps in the topic areas covered by YMPs, one area where YMPs begin to make progress is in the **community-wide acceptance of youth participation using an asset-based approach**. In a recent special youth participation issue of *Young*, the Nordic Journal of Youth Research, the guest editorial by Harris and Wyn (2010) suggests that although research often focuses on youth knowledge and skill deficits as major barriers to meaningful youth participation in civic life, there is an emerging area of research that identifies the deficit as the perspective of policymakers and a failure to adjust governance processes. Yet, in the United States, communities that create YMPs are beginning to address this deficit. Although many of the plans do not attempt to adjust governance processes and still expect youth to participate in a format determined by and for adults (such as on adult boards), simply having a YMP with a focus on youth participation shows that policymakers are attempting to change things. The dedication of staff time and funding for the creation

of a YMP could in fact signify a shift in the way that policymakers see youth participation and the needs of young people in the community.

In the following chapter, I discuss the topic of the physical environment and how YMPs address it.

CHAPTER SIX:

FINDINGS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

In the previous chapter, I discussed how YMPs address youth participation. In this chapter I discuss the physical environment and the role that it plays in YMPs. First, I discuss the importance of the physical environment when planning for child- and youth-friendly communities and then I discuss the six themes that are addressed by YMPs related to the physical environment.

Research on the Physical Environment

The physical environment plays a significant role in the quality of life experienced in a community by residents of all ages. This is evidenced by its prevalence in research on participation and community development (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990), place attachment (Fried, 2000) and community satisfaction (Zehner, 1972). Specifically related to children and youth and the physical environment, previous research has addressed a wide range of topics.

The importance of green spaces and nature to children has been studied in many contexts (Simmons, 1994; Freeman, 1995; Wells & Evans, 2003). For example, a study involving children with attention deficit disorder found that contact with nature and green play areas resulted in less severe attention deficit symptoms (Taylor, Kuo, & Sullivan, 2001).

Scholars have found parallels between the use of sustainable transport systems, including alternative modes of transportation such as walking, biking, and public transport with child-friendly cities (Tranter & Malone, 2008). Research has also shown a link between the design of the environment and the physical activity levels of children and youth. Specifically, children were more active in places with sidewalks, destinations that were accessible by walking, available public transportation, low traffic density, and fewer uncontrolled intersections (Davison & Lawson, 2006, p. 13).

Research has focused on places, such as parks and playgrounds, designed specifically for use by children and youth (Wridt, 2004; Cardon, van Cauwenberghe, & Labarque, 2008). For example a study in California found that parks provide important opportunities for physical activity of children and youth, second only to schoolyards (Loukaitou-Sideris & Sideris, 2010). The design of parks is also an important consideration, as specific amenities such as skateboarding facilities, can lead to a

well-used park (p. 101). For activities such as street skateboarding, places that are not necessarily designed for youth but include amenities that lend themselves to a specific youth-oriented use like skateboarding (i.e. benches, ledges, and concrete surfaces) can lead to a well-used park (Németh, 2006).

However, spaces that are poorly designed, located in an inconvenient location, or regulated to exclude certain population groups can limit the number of children and youth who benefit from them. In one example, city officials in Philadelphia banned skateboarding from a centrally located urban park, essentially excluding use of the park by specific youth (Németh, 2006, p. 309). In addition, research in Australia found that only one-third of parents reported community parks and playgrounds as the usual play spaces for their children, citing concerns with safety and a lack of age appropriate equipment as deterrents (Veitch, Bagley, Ball, & Salmon, 2006, p. 386).

Research also shows that teenagers value places where they can be with other people and where they can bring other people such as their friends (Owens, 1994, p. 49).

And spaces that provide affordances for simple, affordable activities have been shown to facilitate spatial mobility and interaction between groups of children (Haider, 2007, p. 85-87).

Additional characteristics of child- and youth-friendly places include visibility in the community; access and circulation; opportunities for self-expression, entertainment and communication; private versus public space; segregating activities such as giving young children their own developmentally appropriate playground; and providing access to private services and “unmentionables” such as dispensers for condoms and sanitary products, public phones, and public restrooms (Communitybuilders.nsw, 2007). Yet, simply providing facilities and spaces is not enough and the social dimension of those spaces must also be taken into consideration when designing for young people (White, 2001). These include conditions of use, such as cost; how facilities and spaces are viewed by young people with consideration of social status; and how those spaces are viewed by adults in the community and if those views are communicated to young people. Children also identified other considerations, such as social integration, safety, and the provision of basic needs as important indicators of community quality (Chawla & Malone, 2003, p. 123). In the following sections, I discuss how these topics and others related to the physical environment are addressed in the YMPs I analyzed.

Physical Environment Themes in YMPs

As stated in chapter four, 35 percent (9) of the communities that responded to my questionnaire (N=26) indicate a focus area in their YMP that I interpreted as the

physical environment. A few of these focus areas were described in the following ways:

Create more community facilities and spaces for teens. - Temecula, CA

Provide a Safe, Secure and Sustainable Environment - Claremont, CA

Strong neighborhoods - Hampton, VA

Table 6.1 includes the complete list of communities that indicate a focus on the physical environment. I compared this list of nine communities to what I found during the content analysis of the YMP documents in order to see how the perception of addressing the physical environment translated into the number of times the plans reference the physical environment sub-themes.

Table 6.1: Physical environment focus – self report versus referenced sub-themes

Questionnaire Data: Communities that self-reported a focus on the physical environment	Content Analysis Data: Number of references to the physical environment (all sub-themes)
Hampton, VA	93
Santa Ana, CA	56
Manchester, CT	44
Diamond Bar, CA	39
Durango/La Plata County, CO	26
Claremont, CA	24
Pleasanton, CA	16
Temecula, CA	14
James City County, VA	7

I present the information in Table 6.1 not to highlight the nine communities and show how much they actually reference the physical environment. Instead I want to highlight the great range in the quantity of text these nine communities include about the physical environment in their plans. Since they all indicated a focus on the physical environment, along with other focus areas, it is interesting to see this great range of coverage. This information also highlights the importance of using multiple research methods. Using the questionnaire data alone would not allow me to fully understand how each community addresses the physical environment in their YMP.

In order to determine specific ways that communities with YMPs address the physical environment, I analyzed all of the YMPs that I collected (38 plans), rather than just those nine mentioned above. To do this, I created a tree node for the “physical environment” in NVivo and as I read each YMP document, I created sub-nodes for each separate theme that I interpreted. The sub-nodes include:

- ***Spaces to be used by children and youth*** – including references to both specific spaces that are designed for young people to use, such as ballfields, as well as general spaces that young people will use as members of the community, such as a neighborhood.
- ***Transportation*** – including references to alternative modes of transportation used by young people, as well as issues, such as traffic safety, that impact the quality of life for young people.

- ***Safety*** – including references to safety related to the physical environment, such as young people feeling safe in parks or police patrolling a neighborhood. I did not include references to issues such as domestic violence that were mentioned in the plans since there may be limited relevance to the physical environment.
- ***Place Attachment and Community Connection*** – including references to programs and activities described in terms of enabling young people to feel connected to their community.
- ***Natural Environment*** – including references to environmental education, open space preservation, and environmental clean up activities.
- ***Public Art*** – including references to youth-created visual and performance art in the community.

Table 6.2 shows these themes and their relative frequency of occurrence in the YMP documents. The number of YMPs represents a count of plans that includes the sub-theme even just once. The number of references represents the number of separate times the sub-theme came up within the entire text of the plans. And the number of words represents the total number of words used within the YMPs to describe the sub-theme.

Table 6.2: Sub-themes and frequencies within the physical environment node

Physical Environment Sub-Themes	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
1. Spaces to be used by children and youth	35 (92%)	265	21,213
2. Transportation	27 (71%)	97	5,766
3. Safety (related to the physical environment)	22 (58%)	47	2,178
4. Place attachment and community connection	10 (26%)	31	1,820
5. Natural environment	6 (16%)	19	842
6. Public art	2 (5%)	4	57
Total	37¹⁶	463	31,876

Since some plans used more text than others to describe an idea, the word count or number of references does not necessarily correlate with the *importance* that each theme is given, but rather shows how much each theme is addressed in relation to other themes. For example, the “transportation” sub-theme is only included in five more master plans than the “safety” sub-theme, which is included in 22 plans. Yet the number of words used to describe “transportation” is more than double the number for “safety”. Because of these differences, it is important to look specifically at the text used to describe each of these sub-themes to determine exactly how YMPs address the physical environment. On the following pages, I describe each sub-theme in detail.

¹⁶ These sub-themes are present in 37 *different* youth master plans. Some plans include strategies or recommendations in more than one category. This means that just one of the 38 youth master plans I analyzed did not include a reference to the physical environment.

Sub-Theme One: Spaces to be Used by Children and Youth

“Spaces to be used by children and youth” is a sub-theme I identified in 35 of the 38 YMPs, the highest number of all the sub-themes. Since this was a large node that represented many different aspects of space in a community, I sub-divided it into eight different categories. These include:

- *General neighborhood improvements* – including references to a general philosophy about improving a neighborhood for young people rather than specific recommendations.
- *Recreation facilities* – including references to the creation or improvement of recreation facilities for children and youth as well as an increase in programming at existing recreation sites.
- *Hang out spaces* – including references to flexible spaces that are not necessarily programmed but allow for young people to freely hang out with their friends.
- *Use of facilities for child/youth/family programs and services* – including references to the use of new and existing community facilities that accommodate programs and services.
- *Youth-friendly Businesses* – including references to businesses that are either oriented toward children and youth or incorporate youth-friendly practices.

- *Educational spaces* – including references to places for young people to engage in educational activities, such as libraries.
- *Housing* – including references to housing as it relates to the needs of children and youth.

Table 6.3 shows the relative frequencies for each of these sub-nodes, listed in order by the number of YMPs that include each category.

Table 6.3: Categories and frequencies within spaces to be used by children and youth

Categories within Spaces to be Used by Children and Youth	# of YMPs
General neighborhood improvements	17
Recreation facilities	13
Hang out spaces	12
Facilities for child/youth/family programs and services	10
Youth-friendly businesses	9
Educational spaces	8
Housing	5
Total	35

I describe how the YMPs address each of these categories in the following sections.

General Neighborhood Improvements Category

Seventeen of the plans include recommendations for general improvements to make individual neighborhoods or the entire community better for children, youth and families. Many of these plans include a general description for the types of spaces

they want to create and encourage. For example, Thousand Oaks, CA, proposes general improvements and focuses on the accessibility of these spaces, “Support and encourage youth-friendly venues and facilities to creatively accommodate local youth. Consider hours of operation, safety and security, transportation, and accessibility”. Similarly, La Plata County, CO encouraged play spaces that young people can easily access:

Every new neighborhood, and when possible existing neighborhoods, should have safe parks or playgrounds that families and children can get to easily by foot or bike, and where children can gather with, and without, adults. These places should also be inviting to the elders of the neighborhood.

Only one community, Brighton, CO, specifically recommends design techniques for developers.

The Youth Commission recommends that the city requires new developers to ensure that their projects include design techniques that promote safety and citizen-friendly qualities, and that efforts be made in both new and existing neighborhoods to reduce speeding and other unsafe driving. If the city requires that every new development incorporates friendly neighborhood designs (detached sidewalks, pocket parks, lighted trails and bikeways, traffic calming strategies, etc.) it will not only attract more families to move in, but it will make everyone living in those neighborhoods safer and more exposed to environments that promote thriving.

The fact that only one community addressed design techniques is disappointing, yet not surprising. Existing research shows that designers for commercial areas are often asked to *discourage* use by teenagers rather than add design elements that would

attract them and provide space to socialize and hang out in groups (Owens, 2002, p. 159).

Other communities, such as Temecula, CA, mention promoting youth involvement in the creation of community spaces. “Create community centers and other spaces through youth involvement that provide opportunities for youth activities and creative expression, and are safe places to ‘hang out’”. Roanoke, VA also mentioned youth participation in neighborhood improvement. “Youth participate in neighborhood planning groups to improve sidewalks and greenways and identify how to enhance neighborhood resources that are youth-oriented and youth-friendly”.

Despite these two references, it is surprising that so few communities recommend youth participation in the design of the physical environment, despite the major focus on youth participation I highlight in the previous chapter. Studies have shown that very few youth feel adults listen to them or consult them about what they want in the community as youth (Elsley, 2004, p. 160). Yet, researchers have promoted the involvement of youth as design participants to inform design decisions and increase their sense of ownership and responsibility regarding community spaces (Owens, 2002, p. 161). Therefore, this is one area that YMPs essentially ignore despite the research.

The YMPs mentioned above, focus on slightly different aspects of general community or neighborhood improvement recommendations. Next, I describe the other categories within the sub-theme “spaces to be used by children and youth”.

Recreation Spaces Category

Thirteen communities reference facilities and programs oriented toward recreation. Although more YMPs include this category than most of the other categories within the “spaces to be used by children and youth” sub-theme, many communities also have other plans that specifically address recreation. Through a quick internet search of all the community websites, I found at least nine of the communities have separate parks, trails, and recreation master plans (or something similar) and many more have a section dedicated to parks and recreation in their community’s general plan. Therefore, for some communities, explicit recommendations focused on recreation would be more fully described in a separate community plan.

Within the recreation theme, communities such as Santa Ana, CA focus on programming, “Increase the effectiveness of programming on existing recreational space”. While others, such as Sierra Madre, CA, focus on improving or creating recreational facilities:

Create new recreation facilities in Sierra Madre to expand youth options other than in school activities, such as:

a) *Skateboard park (currently implemented by other local cities.)*

- b) *Roller hockey rink. Leagues could be started through local businesses.*
- c) *An additional full size baseball field. Sierra Madre baseball leagues (Farm and Little League, Girls Softball, and Pony Colt) do not have enough field time to accommodate the number of players wanting to play.*
- d) *More volleyball and basketball courts.*
- e) *A soccer field.*

Interestingly, research has not found a significant link between the total number of neighborhood recreational facilities within a community and the level of adolescents' physical activity (Nichol, Janssen, & Pickett, 2010, p. 446). Although this finding warrants further investigation, it highlights the fact that simply providing recreation facilities without addressing other issues such as transportation, safety, and programming will not automatically lead to an increase in physical activity. For example, research in Australia found that parental concerns about safety significantly deterred the use of community parks and playgrounds, consequently limiting their children's physical activity (Veitch et al. 2006, p. 386).

In addition, in a study investigating physical activity participation differences between low- and high-SES youth, low-SES students reported that having a well-maintained facility with good equipment was very important to them because the facilities in their neighborhood or at home were not well-maintained. In contrast, the high-SES youth did not mention the facilities but instead focused on the need for winter activity programs because they were usually at summer camp or on vacation during the summer (Humbert et al., 2006, p. 477). It should be noted that although

recreational facilities are often designed for physical activity, they also provide opportunities for the social integration of young people and may provide other benefits beyond just physical activity. Santa Ana, CA recognizes these other benefits and the possible implications of providing recreational opportunities in the community as shown by this statement included in its plan, “Action on these recommendations could aid in deterring youth from getting involved with gangs and could offer children and teens safer places to exercise and socialize as they develop into healthy adults”.

Through the interviews and questionnaires, I found that many communities also mention the creation of a skate park, a type of recreation facility specifically oriented to youth, as a recent accomplishment and a source of pride. For example, my interview with Santa Clarita, CA revealed:

... about a year ago we opened our new skate park. We had one before but it was too small and wasn't meeting the needs of the community. The council put in a significant amount of money into a skate park that is now considered one of the best in the west. It is certainly one of the largest. It is over an acre in size and it has been featured in some fairly major skating publications and is a regional draw. We get people from all over LA. And that was really a physical improvement in response to the concept of giving the kids a place to go do their thing.

However, research has shown that skate parks are often located in less desirable areas or separate from other park activities (Owens, 2002, p.160; Németh, 2006, p. 311).

Although I did not ask about this in the interviews, the YMP documents I analyzed

did not address the issue of location for skate parks or other similar youth-oriented areas.

Hang Out Spaces Category

Research has shown that teenagers in particular value being with their friends (Owens, 1988, p. 20). Twelve communities address this need by including statements about providing places for young people to “hang out” and socialize with their peers. Some communities mentioned the need for hang out spaces more generally, as is the case with Hampton, VA and Temecula, CA.

This issue, more commonly referred to as Youth Space, has been an issue in Hampton for over a decade. Young people desire a place or group of places to go where they can be among other young people, peers from their schools or neighborhoods, and other community members to whom they can relate. – Hampton, VA

Through the environmental scan process, youth and adult participants identified a need for flexible, multi-use spaces that could house special events and ongoing activities for youth and teens. Participants also expressed a need for more youth- oriented businesses and other public spaces to “hang out.” – Temecula, CA

When more specific places were mentioned, teen centers or youth cafés were the type of space most frequently recommended. For example Albany, CA recommends:

Explore the opportunities for developing a high school age “cafe” that serves the needs of older teens with space for getting together to socialize with friends, play pool, listen to a visiting band, dance, and eat. Explore opportunities for teen operation of the cafe, restaurant and entertainment.

Communities that already have a youth oriented space also focused on increasing the appeal of that space to young people. For example, Claremont, CA recommends, “Develop additional activities and outreach that broaden the appeal of the Youth Activity Center”. Sierra Madre, CA recommends making improvements to their recreation center to create a more appealing place for young people:

Improve the Recreation Center with furnishings that allow a multipurpose room with a schedule of different activities, (homework, computer, and for relaxation ‘down time’ center or entertainment).

While teen cafés and youth-oriented businesses are definitely warranted, other hang out spaces, not discussed in the YMPs, include informal areas such as streets, sidewalks and public plazas. Research has highlighted the value of those places for “impromptu and informal gatherings and exploration” by teenagers (Owens, 2002, p. 161; Owens 1994, p. 49; Elsley, 2004, p. 158).

In addition, research on designing spaces for teens recommends the creation of teen-friendly designs rather than teen-specific places (Owens, 2002, p. 161). Teen-friendly designs should involve providing design elements in public places that accommodate teen activities and social needs. For example, the provision of seating that allows a group of teens to sit and talk, while also being a place where things are happening, can be one way to accommodate rather than discourage them from using an area (Owens, 2002, p.161).

Unfortunately, teens involved in the Growing Up in Cities-New York City project revealed that they do not feel welcome or safe in some of the informal spaces like streets, apartment courtyards, and public parks because of adult regulations, poor management, and privatization (Driskell, Fox, & Kudva, 2008, p. 2837). Similarly, research with teens in England found that they frequent places like shopping malls and fast food restaurants both during the day and in the evening as safe alternatives to the streets (Watt & Stenson, 1998, p. 261). An additional phenomenon that is creating spaces that are “un-friendly” to teens is the use of the “mosquito buzz”, a high-pitched noise only audible to young people. This noise machine is being used in places such as the UK to control youth from loitering around shops and other commercial establishments (BBC News, 2005). Although further research may be required for different communities, YMPs that are focused on providing safe and welcoming places for youth should also provide recommendations for addressing these more informal spaces and ensuring that they are safe places for youth to hang out.

Use of Facilities for Child/Youth/Family Programs and Services Category

Ten YMPs reference the need for facilities to run programs and services for children, youth and families. These recommendations involve the use of existing facilities. For example, Sierra Madre, CA recommends the use of existing facilities for youth

programs, “Work with area churches, businesses, schools, and other youth agencies (such as the YMCA) to provide space at their facilities and to have or develop programs that will be available to all youth”.

The recommendations also involve the creation of new facilities. For example, Omaha, NE recommends the creation of a new facility to be used by children and youth:

Create an adolescent mental health care facility. Youth and families need an appropriately staffed facility, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to which they can turn for immediate mental health assessment, intervention, and inpatient care in a crisis.

Finally, some communities recommend the cooperation between entities to provide convenient facilities such as Charleston, SC, “City recreation programs develop a strong cooperative relationship with schools to use facilities after school and during summer to provide neighborhood locations”.

Youth-Friendly Businesses Category

Research has shown that youth value commercial areas, such as shopping malls, as places where they can gather with their friends (Owens, 1994, p. 53). While youth-friendly businesses could go hand-in-hand with hang out places, I broke it into a separate sub-theme since hanging out can occur within more places than just businesses. Nine communities mention the need for businesses that are

either oriented toward youth or incorporate youth-friendly practices. For example Sierra Madre, CA focuses on attracting youth-oriented businesses to the community. Its plan proposes to:

Create incentives for new Sierra Madre businesses that are youth oriented. Examples: a) bowling alley, b) restaurants, c) arts (theater, music, dance).

Thousand Oaks, CA focuses more on encouraging youth-friendly business practices:

Promote a climate of respect and mutual benefit between youth and business owners in Thousand Oaks. Encourage dialogue between the business community (e.g. Chamber of Commerce, Business Roundtable, Malls etc.) and youth regarding mutual expectations.

Portland/Multnomah County, OR goes further to recommend designating certain businesses as youth-friendly by including the following in its plan:

Collaborate with the YPAs [youth program aides] and the MYC [Multnomah Youth Commission] to create standards for "youth-friendly businesses"- PDC could serve youth through recruiting "youth-friendly" businesses to Urban Renewal Areas. A youth-friendly business is one that pays youth good wages, teaches a transferable set of skills, and offers summer jobs or jobs with flexible hours. Youth Program Aides or the Multnomah Youth Commission could write requirements and determine which businesses may be labeled as youth-friendly. This designation could be similar to the "Elder-Friendly" designation provided by Elders in Action.

Similarly, Hampton, VA's plan describes the evaluation of local businesses in the following way:

Currently, the Community Plan Subcommittee of the Hampton Youth

Commission is working on evaluating local businesses for their 'youth-friendliness.' This evaluation is based on location, overall service, affordability for youth, ambience, etc. The criteria are based on the recently created Youth-Friendly Guidebook, an outline of how a business in Hampton can cater successfully to young people. The eventual evaluation and publication of all of Hampton's businesses will give young people a road map for where to go and where not to go to spend money, and will give businesses a reason to make sure they are fulfilling their pledge to render user-friendly services to all potential customers.

One issue with the two initiatives described above, is that they require on-going youth participation and potentially on-going adult supervision. Although this is ideal, it may not always be feasible and should be addressed in a YMP.

I personally helped facilitate a similar project to evaluate the youth-friendliness of businesses in Boulder, CO. Although participating teens came up with the idea and were committed to it for over a year, they graduated and/or moved on to other activities before a comprehensive evaluation was completed. Despite enthusiasm from the business community, the lack of on-going youth participation made it difficult for this project to be successful.

Educational Spaces Category

Eight YMPs mention community spaces for educational uses such as libraries and centers for homework help. For example, Sierra Madre, CA and Roanoke, VA focus on the community library. Sierra Madre, CA's plan states, "Expand the Library to

provide identifiable study and expanded computer space and a multipurpose room for children's programs which can also be used as a homework center for young adult services, age-sequestered book collection, reading area". Roanoke, VA's plan states, "Partnerships between public and school libraries bring in more elementary and middle school patrons through patron-friendly environments, policies and procedures, as well as access to technology that assists with homework, and job and career planning".

Other communities, such as Thousand Oaks, CA, do not focus on a specific location for educational activities; they instead mention it as a resource to be combined with other spaces such as a teen center. "Utilize the Teen Center and explore new satellite 'hubs' through which youth can participate in activities and access social services, tutoring academic support, and other resources".

Housing for Children and Youth Category

Finally, the last category I identified within the "spaces to be used by child and youth" node focuses on housing. Despite the importance of housing in the lives of children and youth, only five of the YMPs include anything about this topic. In addition, all five communities mention it in a very limited way with only general recommendations about housing.

Two of the communities focus on youth in crisis. For example, Albany, CA addresses runaway teens, “Explore the opportunities for temporary housing alternatives for Albany runaway teens”. While Grand Rapids, MI, focuses on homeless young adults but doesn’t mention housing specifically “Decrease number of homeless young adults”.

The other three communities focus on affordable housing. Claremont, CA refers to housing as a means to attract youth back to the community, “Enhance efforts to develop a variety of housing so that youth can return to Claremont to live and raise their families”. Temecula, CA’s plan states, “Assess opportunities for low-cost housing for recent high school graduates”. And Chesapeake, VA refers to the location of affordable housing through the statement, “Develop a policy to de-concentrate affordable housing by requiring that new housing developments have a percentage of housing affordable for low income families”.

Although housing may be addressed in other community plans, such as a separate housing master plan or a development code, the specific issues faced by children and youth may not be addressed in those plans. This is an area for further research.

Other Sub-Themes within The Physical Environment Node

In the following sections, I describe the other sub-themes within the general focus

area of the physical environment. These sub-themes were referenced in fewer YMPs than “spaces to be used by children and youth”.

Sub-Theme Two: Transportation

Transportation was the next most common sub-theme within the physical environment node, referenced to varying degrees by 27 of the 38 YMPs (71%). The majority of transportation issues I identified involve: accommodating alternative modes of transportation such as walking, biking and busing; making public transportation more affordable; locating services in accessible and convenient locations; and increasing traffic safety. Most communities provide general recommendations regarding these issues, while a few communities provide more specific strategies to deal with the issues present in their community.

The relatively high number of plans (27) with recommendations focused on transportation is not surprising given the large body of literature on independent mobility and transportation for children and youth. Research points to the benefits of improving transportation options for young people. For example, children’s spatial mobility results in an improvement in their social, physical and creative skills (Haider, 2007, p. 85) and as children get older, their range of independent mobility increases (Elsley, 2004, p. 159).

Communities often focus on alternative modes of transportation to accommodate travel by children and youth who do not drive or have access to a car. Although the YMPs do not specify the intended age group for each transportation recommendation, research has shown that younger teenagers are using alternative modes of transportation more often than older teenagers, as teenagers often abandon walking and taking the bus once they become licensed to drive (Clifton, 2003, p. 79). Some of the communities focusing on alternative modes of transportation include both general and specific recommendations, such as Claremont, CA, “Expand the number of bike lanes and pedestrian-friendly routes throughout the community and encourage their use”; and, “Explore expanding the proposed fixed route trolley to include a loop covering the full-length of Indian Hill Boulevard as well as up and down Mountain Avenue between Foothill Boulevard and Harrison Avenue”.

One community in particular, Sierra Madre, CA, also noted potential problems associated with alternative modes of transportation that should be addressed.

Sierra Madre is a three square mile city, within which are businesses and services easily accessible to children by foot, bicycle, skates and skateboards. These forms of transportation are essential for those with no access to an adult to drive them to activities. Problems associated with these styles of transportation are the many hills, safety considerations (cars, skate boards and pedestrians together on City streets), occasional extreme heat and poor air quality, and the lack of adult supervision.

Providing more affordable public transportation was a recommendation present in a

number of plans. For example, James City County, VA recommends: “The free fare program for youth riding James City County Transit will be well publicized at sites that youth frequent such as schools, libraries, parks, theaters and churches”. Olmsted County, MN also focuses on the affordability of transportation, “Develop an affordable transportation system that will meet the needs of families with young children by September 1, 2001”; and “Free transportation for students who need it to participate in school and community activities”.

Several communities include recommendations focused on locating community services and programs in accessible and convenient locations. For example, Albany, CA recommends, “Link after-school and child care activities so children can participate without parent transportation/supervision”.

Three communities explicitly address traffic safety. Santa Clarita, CA and Albany, CA focused on increasing traffic controls. Santa Clarita, CA’s plan states, “The community would like to address and plan for the increase in population, by adding more roads, stoplights, and crosswalks”. Albany, CA’s plan states “Make city accessible for non-driving youth – bike paths/lanes, safe crossing areas and traffic control”. Hampton, VA focuses more on educating young drivers through the recommendation, “Increase the amount of education young people receive relating to car accident awareness, not necessarily through traditional classroom lessons”.

In addition, increasing travel options available in a community, including automobile travel, can result in greater activity participation (Clifton, 2003, p. 79; Page, Cooper, Griew, & Jago, 2010, p. 9). Since increased activity participation is often a goal, communities may want to focus on improving access to multiple modes of transportation in order to increase the number of children and youth who are able to travel independently and participate.

Sub-Theme Three: Safety

Research has shown that the places least liked by young people are often described as unsightly, vandalized, and unsafe (Elsley, 2004, p. 158). In a study with Australian teenagers, 41 percent viewed the places they valued as safe (Owens, 1994, p. 49). In addition, the Growing Up in Cities-NYC project found that youth in the city had few places to go where they felt safe, welcome, and free from anti-youth rules and regulations (Driskell, Fox & Kudva, 2008, p. 2836). This was also found in research on physical activity participation. Low-SES youth reported that the lack of a safe environment might cause them to refrain from participating in physical activity programs (Humbert et al., 2006, p. 477).

Slightly more than half of the YMPs (22 out of 38) address these issues by recommending the creation of safer places for young people. Many communities

expressed a general focus on safety in the community, such as Albany, CA, “Ensure that parks and recreation facilities are safe, inviting, and provide for expanded activities”. And North Fair Oaks, Unincorporated Redwood City, CA’s plan states, “Increase neighborhood pride through cleaner and safer neighborhoods (e.g. making buildings safe, cleaning up streets).” Temecula, CA’s plan includes the goal, “Safe Youth – Youth are protected from gang behavior, violence, and drug and alcohol abuse, and feel safe traveling around the City”.

Other communities, such as Hampton, VA, go into more detail about why safety is important with the following statement:

When a person enters a neighborhood or public place and initially feels uncomfortable or unsafe, this is a lack of perception of safety. If a certain place is generally associated with crime this is also a lack of perception of safety. The Youth-Friendly Guidebook used to evaluate businesses and service organizations lists safety as one of its vital criteria. In Hampton, some of the following areas may be labeled as having a lack of perception of safety:

- *Neighborhoods that statistically have high crime rates.*
- *Recreational areas that attract mainly teens and young adults, a place to “hang out” (ex. basketball courts, nightclubs, movie theaters, etc).*

The reason this is an issue is that young people want to be with their friends regardless of the perceived safety of the area in which they are meeting. The responsibility falls on the community to increase safety through partnerships with various sources such as:

- *Police*
- *Legislators (on both a local and state level)*
- *Neighborhood safety organizations (such as Neighborhood Watch)*

In contrast, some communities include specific safety recommendations, like Sierra

Madre, CA, Brighton, CO, and Portland/Multnomah County, OR, which emphasize youth contacts and positive relationships as a way to promote a sense of safety.

Elementary school children benefit directly from their contacts with the Sierra Madre Police Department and its form of community policing. As a result of the City's low crime rate, Sierra Madre Police have the opportunity to know community youth in a non-confrontational, supportive manner. Officers regularly emphasize the positive aspects of safety and security. This includes rewarding children who wear bicycle helmets with ice cream coupons, rather than citing those not in compliance. In addition, youth contacts are emphasized in the expenditure of overtime funds. Officers are funded to spend time in the parks, patrolling the mountain trails, working community events and overall being visible, accessible and available to youth. In conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department, the Police Department sponsors special events for Sierra Madre children, which have included bike rodeos, skateboard exhibitions, and swim and softball teams. The Department also sponsors "Say No to Drugs" programs. - Sierra Madre, CA

Block parties and other communal events make the neighborhoods safer because people get to know and enjoy their neighbors. The more positive time neighbors spend together, the more they realize how much they have in common, and the more they will enjoy each other, which greatly reduces the likelihood of neighborhood-based violence. - Brighton, CO

Encourage youth to organize Know Your Neighborhood groups (KYNs)- KYN is a program that has been started by POEM [Portland Office of Emergency Management] that combines skills taught by Neighborhood Watch and the NET trainings. KYN combines pieces of other programs to inform small communities about emergency preparedness on their own blocks. Communities can hold block parties to fill out the information in the KYN kit. – Portland/Multnomah County, OR

Although just over half of the YMPs include a statement about safety, none of them include specific recommendations about changes to the physical environment that will improve safety. For example, the addition of lighting in public spaces can

increase a sense of safety. Research on children's play and recreation in Dhaka City, Bangladesh, found that good lighting was particularly important in playgrounds and amusement parks and was the second most important element found in parks for the 499 children interviewed (Ahmed & Sohail, 2008, p. 267).

In order to create a safer community, I suggest that more specific recommendations can be included in the YMPs to address safety issues in the physical environment.

Sub-Theme Four:

Place Attachment or Community Connection

The concepts of place attachment and community connection have been well researched and can be considered important considerations for improving a community for children and youth. Place attachment involves affect, emotion and feeling toward places or environmental settings (Altman & Low, 1992) and is often based on both the physical and social characteristics of an environment (Manzo, 2003). Forms of childhood place attachment include affection for a place associated with happiness and security; transcendence through one-to-one connection with the environment; ambivalence between identification with a place of origin and the complications of social injustice and stigma; and idealization of an environmentally abstracted place created as a symbol of personal desires and values (Chawla, 1992). Research exploring favorite places found that adolescents use favorite places to

“anchor emotion- and self-regulation’ and to refresh and regain a sense of calm after threatening or negative experiences. (Manzo, 2003).

Despite this large body of research, this sub-theme is not well represented in the YMPs. The idea of place attachment or community connection was referenced in only six of the YMPs, ranging from very general statements to more specific ideas of how to accomplish it or an explanation of the benefits.

Two communities, Brighton, CO and La Plata County, CO, include detailed explanations of why a sense of community connection is important.

People who feel personally connected to others become more invested in their community, look out for the safety of others, and take the time to make positive contributions to their community. This initiative builds on existing strategies and involves Brighton’s citizens to expand upon these or develop new ones. Reaching out to community members promotes connection and an environment of acceptance and safety. – Brighton, CO

By increasing people’s sense of belonging to their neighborhood and the recognition that they are not alone, they will also increase their willingness and ability to ask for and receive help of all kinds. This will also increase people’s resiliency--a primary component of health and wellness. – La Plata County, CO

General statements were included in plans such as Claremont, CA, “Increasing efforts to ensure that all neighborhoods and residents feel connected to the community as a whole” and Albany, CA, “Create a feeling of belonging and

community by providing opportunities for families to be together and for youth to participate in community events”.

Although still general, the City of Diamond Bar, CA goes further to include recommendations for what is needed to accomplish a greater sense of community connection.

Strengthen and increase programs that connect youth in meaningful ways to their family, school, neighborhood, and community such as family interactive activities, events that showcase family or youth talents, intergenerational programs, and neighborhood events. Emphasize civic involvement and leadership development.

Brighton, CO also includes specific recommendations for how to achieve a sense of community connection.

The Youth Commission recommends the development of the Brighton Community Safety Connections Initiative (BCSC), a community-wide coordinated effort to link youth and adult citizens and increase the likelihood that an environment of familiarity, acceptance and belonging exists among the citizens of Brighton.

Sub-Theme Five: Natural Environment

The next sub-theme I identified within the physical environment node focuses on the natural environment and developing an environmental ethic related to open space preservation, recycling, environmental clean up activities, or environmental education.

Research has shown that young people in Scotland consider “wild areas”, such as farm fields and woodlands, as highly valued (Elsley, 2004, p.158). Other research identified natural parks as the most popular outdoor place type of a group of white suburban teenagers in California. The reasons given for their preference of natural parks include: their beauty; they are seen as places to get away and be with nature; and they provide places to recreate and feel better (Owens, 1988, p. 18). Yet, despite this growing body of literature, only six YMPs reference the importance of the natural environment.

Two communities in particular emphasize the need for children and youth to have access (visually or physically) to open space and natural environments. Santa Clarita, CA expressed a desire for open space preservation with the recommendation, “The community would also like for less homes to be built, preserve open space, and build more schools to accommodate the accelerated growth the community has been impacted by”. And Santa Fe, NM expressed a need for giving young people access to nature.

It is important to get children and young people into the natural environment. There are demonstrable benefits in giving young people a greater awareness of their ties to nature, reducing fear and isolation, providing a sense of place, and offering stability in a world of instability.

Other communities recommend programs and activities to promote an environmental ethic. For example, Claremont, CA recommends, “Expand recycling education and

programs to include all youth sports, groups, community and service groups, and city parks in order to increase community-wide involvement”. And the Portland/Multnomah County, OR plan includes more detailed recommendations about what should be done regarding environmental awareness by focusing on each City/County department separately. For example, one of its recommendations for the Bureau of Environmental Services includes:

Train a team of youth volunteers who would lead younger students on site during school landscaping projects and on field trips involving stream and wetland restoration. Another way of increasing BES's [Bureau of Environmental Services] capacity is through a student volunteer team that could be trained to help schools with school naturescape and rain garden projects and to attend multiple events throughout the year.

And one of its recommendations for the Office of Sustainable Development in Portland, OR includes:

Connect with high school clubs whose work relates to sustainability. Many high schools have clubs related to taking care of the Earth, e.g. Greens Club and Tree Huggers Club. OSD [Office of Sustainable Development] could collaborate with club members to assist with outreach, education, and sustainability planning for schools. The clubs could also help create sustainability plans for their schools with support from OSD staff. Club members could gather input on developing OSD programs like the Roll-Card Recycling Project.

In addition, during an interview, a staff member in Santa Fe, NM stated that environmental education was important to the community but it was not thoroughly addressed in its plan since it was not a well-known topic when its YMP was last updated in 2005.

You know in the beginning, I was hesitant. We funded outdoor education projects and environmental education for fifteen years before it became popular. I was afraid to highlight it in the plan because it wasn't something anyone else was talking about. Yet, I knew it was important. So I'm delighted to come out of the closet with the importance of the natural environment. I was always asking about natural light and non-toxic environments, natural environments, demonstrate-able benefits, ties to nature, reducing a sense of fear, providing a sense of place and stability. Now we know the health benefits of being green, especially for boys who have ADD.

As additional research becomes available about the benefits of providing access to nature for children and youth, YMPs will ideally start to incorporate these ideas into their strategies and recommendations.

Sub-Theme Six: Public Art

The last sub-theme I identified in the physical environment node is youth-created public art. This was a very minor sub-theme, only referenced by two of the YMPs. Although other communities did include a reference to artistic creativity, it was more in terms of children's participation in activities rather than as a means to improve the physical quality of the community. The references that focus on changes to the physical environment encourage both performance and visual art. For example, Albany, CA's plan states, "Support and encourage strolling musicians, performances and art activities that promote interaction and create energy"; and "Establish a dialogue with school, city and community groups to develop a mural area for creative expression and encourage youth to express themselves through the arts".

Although youth public art projects can be found in communities across the country, this topic is lacking a body of research to support its benefits. One study in the UK found that although public art projects can promote community inclusion and give people a sense of ownership and confidence for the community, it is in no way guaranteed and depends on the specific project (Sharp, 2007, p. 289).

Experiences of the Interviewed Communities

From my interviews with four communities, it became evident that the YMPs were created to guide efforts the community already philosophically believed in or that matched an existing paradigm. For example, in Santa Clarita, CA, addressing the physical environment was part of the general philosophy of the community.

I would like to say that that's based on the philosophy of our city in terms of investing in youth on the front-end as opposed to once they're behind bars, when they are basically in the juvenile justice system. So we've always had this philosophy of providing programs, providing the infrastructure. At one point, it wasn't until this past year, our parks and recreation budget had always been bigger than the law enforcement budget. So you know we've kind of put our money where our mouth is in terms of providing that for our community's youth. One of the parks recently built was one of the skate parks. That was huge for our city. It has been considered one of the top skate parks in the nation and our youth advisory committee, and just the youth in general, played a huge role in shaping what that park is today. We have lots of trails and parks so we try make the community very youth-friendly and family friendly.

As a guide, a YMP could be written to accomplish what the community already wants to accomplish regarding the physical environment. This was expressed in an additional interview with Santa Clarita, CA, "...there was already a focus on the physical environment prior to the master plan, for the entire community not just for the youth. So it was going to happen anyway in other words".

In contrast, the city of Palo Alto, CA had a different experience. My interview revealed they did not address the physical environment as much as they could have because the community at the time had more existing places for youth to hang out. Yet, by not addressing it, the physical environment became less of a priority within the community.

In terms of environment, I don't think it is spoken to as much as maybe it needs to be. And I think one of the things is that when this was written, there were a couple of teen centers. There was a lot more space for youth to be. So I don't think they thought, 'Okay we really need to look at that and make sure it stays in the forefront'. But now budgets have changed and centers are smaller, it has become more of an issue. And it was actually something that was highly spoken to at the youth forum. One of the things that the youth said was that, 'There needs to be more places for us to just be, and to feel comfortable doing that'.

You know our particular model, it kind of looks at local businesses, where youth look to go hang out, like where they go to have coffee and not get kicked out when they are done drinking it. You know it wasn't spelled out all that much. I know it [the YMP] talks about the different centers and places that were currently happening. But I think that when it gets renewed, it will be a lot more specific physically in terms of what the kids need. Then again, it won't say this center or that, it will talk more about the willingness to open up space for them. Not necessarily like, "I need this room" but places to be flexible, like during the day it is a coffee shop but at night it's open for a band

night or an open mic. So I do think it probably needed a little bit more focus, and even though it was touched upon, I think it was a little too specific in terms of talking about a teen center or the YMCA. Because as budgets change and we don't have the resources to do those things, it's more important that it is community space that is available for everybody.

An interview in Santa Fe, NM also revealed that they would focus more on the physical environment when their plan is updated.

...when I do the update for the budget I will highlight [the physical environment]. That will be something I will highlight and probably say more about because it is more and more prominent. I'm so happy that we have it in our plan because the last couple of years it has been other grant makers talking about it and the schools are even talking about it. It is a bigger part of what we talk about now than it ever has been.

Challenges Faced

Depending on the scale, physical environment improvement projects can take a significant amount of time and money. For two of the communities I interviewed, the economy has forced some of the recommended projects listed in their YMP to be put on hold. For example, due to budgetary reasons and a hiring freeze, Brighton, CO has lacked a full-time staff person to oversee the projects identified.

We've tried to start a mentoring house, a place where kids could come after school that's a little bit closer to the high school so that they could come and work on homework and learn life skills and stuff like that. It's another work in progress because it really takes a full-time person to oversee it and to schedule it. So it is in the works but it hasn't fully developed yet.

A lot of the goals in here were gigantic, huge things that weren't going to happen within a year or maybe even five years because they were going to require.... Like for instance one of the strategic recommendations was to establish school-based health centers in all of the secondary schools. And that

requires a lot of different people coming together. You know you've got the school board, you've got the school district, you've got the health clinic itself and you've got all the nurses. So it has taken a lot and we've actually kind of put it on hold right now, basically because there's not space to focus on it.

Santa Clarita, CA also put a community improvement project on hold because of the economy.

You know with the economy, we're not able to really build another community center. But that was certainly on the list as one of our capitol projects when times were better. But at this point that project is on hold.

Despite these challenges, the communities I interviewed indicated that they were able to accomplish a lot.

Conclusion

Although I've described many different categories and sub-themes focused on the physical environment I found that YMPs tend to **provide only general recommendations**. Very few include specific design recommendation or describe the characteristics of places that would appeal to and be used by children and youth.

While it is understandable that many recommendations are general in nature in order to remain relevant over several years, it may be a missed opportunity for communities to create child- and youth-friendly community spaces and incorporate elements that will provide a welcoming environment for young people. For example, since research has shown that teenagers like to hang out with their friends in groups (Owens, 1988,

p. 23), a simple recommendation to incorporate benches and tables into public places where teens can gather in groups while also being part of the rich community life could be included.

However, there also seemed to be an issue when communities included very specific recommendations for capitol improvement projects or specific places, only to have the economy shift or that specific place go out of business. For example, the city of Santa Clarita, CA was not able to build an additional community center, a place recommended in their YMP, because of a shift in the economy.

In terms of the physical environment, YMPs may be in a difficult position since they are often not enforceable like other plans such as a community zoning code or comprehensive plan. Yet, the design and layout of the physical environment is a critical component of a child- and youth-friendly city. Therefore, YMPs need to provide recommendations that are specific enough to get things accomplished yet are updated frequently as to address changes in the community.

Several ideas are missing from most YMPs. One is the **involvement of youth in the design process**. Researchers have promoted youth as design participants to inform design decisions and increase a sense of ownership and responsibility among youth regarding community spaces (Owens, 2002, p. 161). Yet, studies have shown that

very few youth feel that adults listen to them or are consulted about what they want in the community (Elsley, 2004, p. 160).

In addition, research has found that formal play and leisure places designed for young people are not always used as they are intended, which can cause tension between young people and the agencies that oversee those places (Elsley, 2004, p.157). This conflict can also be addressed by including children and youth in the design processes for community spaces and raising the level of awareness of the youth and the community adults. In order to address these issues, YMPs could incorporate recommendations for participatory design with children and youth.

Another idea that YMPs do not include is the need for **spaces that allow teens to be by themselves**. Since research literature notes this as an important type of place that teens value (Owens, 1994, p. 53) it could be addressed in YMPs. Although youth may find these spaces in a community, identifying it in YMP and specifically asking youth what types of spaces they would like, may be something to include in future YMPs.

Additionally, YMPs discuss very little about **informal hang out spaces for teens**, such as sidewalks, streets, and plazas. While these spaces are not designed specifically for teens to use, the inclusion of teen-friendly elements such as benches can often create spaces that are more welcoming and accommodating to their needs.

Scanning the YMP documents, I found that only three of the 38 YMPs (Diamond Bar, CA, Santa Ana, CA and Virginia Beach, VA) **include a map or plan of the community showing the location of specific elements**. I see this as another missing component of YMPs. While communities undoubtedly have maps within other community plans such as a comprehensive plan, it is surprising that almost no maps are included in the plans I analyzed. Many of the issues discussed, such as transportation, could be more clearly articulated and strategized using a spatial representation of the community. When combined with issues such as youth-friendly access and the equitable distribution of facilities and services, evaluating the spatial relationships within the community could be beneficial. For example, the fact that skate parks are often located in less desirable areas or separate from other park activities (Owens, 2002, p.160) could be addressed by providing a map of youth-oriented community facilities and ensuring they are well-placed within the community.

In the next chapter I discuss how the YMPs address diversity and equal representation.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

FINDINGS ON DIVERSITY AND EQUAL REPRESENTATION

In the last chapter I discussed how communities address the physical environment through their YMP. In this chapter, I discuss my third and final focus area, **population diversity and equal representation**. I first provide an overview of how this topic is addressed in the research literature and then describe how communities address it in their YMPs.

Research on Diversity and Equal Representation

Effective youth participation strategies depend on opportunities for all young people, not just those who are articulate or typically get involved (Matthews 2003, p. 273). Similarly, research on leadership initiatives has shown a need to open up leadership development training opportunities to diverse groups that are not traditionally included, such as minorities and youth in poor communities (Foster, 2000, p. 91). Young people themselves see benefits of encouraging participation by diverse youth. Youth participants in voluntary structured activities reported one benefit of participation as the opportunity to interact with peers “who would be normally outside their existing network” (Dworkin, Larson, & Hansen, 2003, p. 220).

As described in Chapter Five, youth councils can provide young people with an opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. However, numerous researchers question their value in providing **equal representation for diverse youth populations**. For example, research in Ireland suggests that although adults asked a youth advisory group to be responsive to and descriptive of other youth, the youth themselves stated that they did not represent the views of other youth (Faulkner, 2009).

Other scholars have also argued that approaches for consultation, such as youth councils, are exclusive and are accessible only to well-resourced youth who have been encouraged to participate and become leaders (Vromen, 2008, p. 5). An Australian study evaluating inclusion and diversity in government decision-making compared universal versus targeted approaches designed to involve the general youth population and recommends **limiting the processes that call for representative young people** and to encourage youth from diverse backgrounds to speak from their own experiences rather than ‘represent’ others (Bell, Vromen, & Collin, 2008, p. 9-13).

During the development of the Irish *National Children’s Strategy*, published in 2000, over 2,500 children and youth were consulted using multiple methods of engagement. The young people were asked, “What is good about living in Ireland?” and “What

would make Ireland a better place?” Although, there were many common themes that came out of the consultation, there was **no uniform children’s view** (Pinkerton, 2004, p. 122-123). This finding raises questions about whether true representation of youth views can be reached in a community process unless all youth are given the opportunity to participate.

In the following sections, I discuss how YMPs address some of these issues related to population diversity and the equal representation of young people.

Coverage of Diversity and Equal Representation by YMPs

In order to determine how YMPs address population diversity and equal representation, I used data from all three of my methods, the questionnaire, the content analysis and the interviews. As I presented in Chapter Four, according to the questionnaire results, only 23 percent of communities (6 out of 26) that answered the question about the focus of their YMP, indicated a focus on diversity and equal representation. Examples from the questionnaire results of how communities described this focus area include:

Freedom from Discrimination and Prejudice – Portland/Multnomah County,

OR

Maximize accessibility for all youth - Diamond Bar, CA

However, for some communities, it is likely that diversity and equal representation fit within goals that are embedded throughout different aspects of the YMP. For example, a goal could be to provide participation opportunities to *all youth*, which could be interpreted as a focus on participation rather than diversity. To determine how much the YMPs actually focus on diversity and equal representation, I included it as a major theme during my content analysis. I created a general node and then as I read through each YMP, I created sub-themes as different topics surfaced. Using this process, I identified the following seven sub-themes:

1. *Awareness and inclusion of diverse populations* – including references to the general philosophy about diversity and inclusion.
2. *Low cost options and financial support* – including references to the provision of financial support in order to remove barriers to community participation for low-income households.
3. *Focus on all children and youth* – including references to a focus on all young people, rather than a targeted focus on individual populations.
4. *Accessibility* – including references to the physical accessibility of programs and spaces and the removal of physical and logistical barriers.
5. *Bilingual resources* – including references to the provision of bilingual information.

6. *Recognition of faith-based organizations* – including references to collaboration with the faith-based community.
7. *Intergenerational and peer-to-peer work* – including references to providing opportunities for young people to work with other young people or with adults.

Table 7.1 below also lists these sub-themes and includes the number of YMPs in which each is referenced, the total number of references or number of times each is mentioned, and the total number of words used to describe each sub-theme.

Table 7.1: Frequency of diversity and equal representation sub-themes

Sub-Theme within Diversity and Equal Representation	# of YMPs	# of References	# of Words
1. Awareness and inclusion of diverse populations	32 (84%)	137	5,958
2. Low cost options and financial support	24 (63%)	122	11,369
3. Focus on all youth	23 (61%)	51	2,242
4. Accessibility	17 (45%)	40	2,542
5. Bilingual resources	15 (39%)	21	1,347
6. Recognition of faith-based organizations	12 (32%)	19	1,038
7. Intergenerational work	11 (29%)	22	973
Total	38 (100%)	412	25,469

As shown in Table 7.1, all 38 of the YMPs that I included in the content analysis refer to diversity and equal representation in some way. However, only 21 of the 38 YMPs actually provide a description of their community demographics. Without a clear description of the existing demographics and the current trends that a community is

dealing with, such as an influx of immigrants, it is not always clear how the YMP addresses the current situation in a community.

In the following sections, I describe in detail how each of these sub-themes is specifically addressed.

Sub-Theme One: Awareness and Inclusion of Diverse Populations

Within the focus area of diversity and equal representation, I created a general sub-theme labeled awareness and inclusion of diverse populations. Although this is a very general theme that seemed to cover the whole focus area, when I read the YMPs I found a significant number of statements about the overriding philosophy of inclusion and diversity that were hard to dissect further. Therefore, it was important to include this sub-theme to describe the general view held about this topic.

I found that 32 out of 38 of the YMPs (84%) include at least one statement that **communicates an awareness of population diversity and inclusion**. Although most of the statements describe an overriding belief system, some of them include strategies for promoting those beliefs among community members. Examples of general paradigm statements include the recommendation found in Albany CA's YMP, "Provide a continuum of opportunities for children of all abilities and disabilities, socio-economic and education levels, and backgrounds, making every

effort to be responsive to the diversity of individuals and families in the community”. Similarly, Claremont, CA recommends, “Develop additional programs that promote socialization across racial, sexual orientation, economic, cultural, differently-abled, religious groups, etc.”. Hampton, VA’s plan includes a general statement as well:

Vision: Hampton will thrive as a diverse community which celebrates, supports and encourages positive people-to-people relations as a foundation for community success. As a city that is tremendously diverse in terms of ethnicity, Hampton has a unique opportunity to harness the benefits of such diversity. The first step taken by the focus group was recognizing that inclusiveness and tolerance are key to the city’s future. The global economy is by definition a diverse ‘place’. To succeed socially as well as economically our community and its citizens must be able to thrive in this type of environment. Young people grow up with the values that are instilled in them by their parents, by their community, and by their friends. The City has many resources at its disposal for the promotion of multicultural appreciation, and by continuing to encourage these assets, especially in the youth of the community, we can better lead our city into a stronger economic and social era.

Other communities recommend **opportunities for educating their residents about population diversity and inclusion**. For example, the YMP for Albany, CA includes the recommendation, “Initiate an educational program for adults that fosters cultural understanding and encourages respect for diversity”. Thousand Oaks, CA also suggests types of activities to increase cultural awareness among residents,

Support a culturally open and tolerant community that assures all youth freedom from harassment and bias. Encourage schools and organizations to raise awareness about Thousand Oaks diversity, differences and commonalities. Events such as cultural fairs, learning circles, and summits are examples of activities that can help facilitate dialogue on these issues.

Similarly, Lakewood, OH's plan includes **specific action steps for increasing cultural awareness** in schools:

Strategy #5: Establish cross-cultural training experiences for school staff, teachers, and parents to improve cultural competency and to facilitate knowledge of high community cultural standards and expectations.

- *Action Step #1: Determine current "best practices" in the area of cultural-competency training.*
- *Action Step #2: Provide information on school and community Websites regarding cultural competency training.*
- *Action Step #3: Provide information to the school and community on local cultural standards: a) Address violation of cultural norms; and b) See Goal #2, Strategy #4 (below) regarding pop culture.*

Some communities also recognize the importance of **encouraging the participation of diverse people in program development and operations**. For example, Albany, CA recommends, "Actively recruit community members from diverse cultural backgrounds to design, staff and participate in youth programs"; and "Ensure that cultural diversity of the community is reflected in day to day curriculum, activities and staffing of education programs".

Communities such as Diamond Bar, CA also recognized the **barriers to community participation** that may exist for different populations.

Accessibility and Social Inclusion: Provide for the greatest degree of participation through the systematic elimination or modification of barriers resulting in increased access for youth and their families to services and facilities. Barriers can include awareness, financial, cultural, physical, age, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or geographic location.

Similarly, some communities recommend addressing those barriers with specific strategies. For example, La Plata County, CO recommends a specific ordinance that would address some of the barriers, “Consider a County Ordinance that would require, when appropriate, Boards, Commissions and Authorities to either collect input from demographically appropriate numbers of diverse youth or to appoint a demographically significant number of youth to serve as voting members”.

Brighton, CO also **addresses those barriers within the creation process** of their YMP, “Another method used to ensure diversity and inclusiveness was to conduct private interviews with individuals important to the planning process who would be unable to participate in the ongoing committee meetings”. Manchester, CT, a community that worked with the same consulting firm as Brighton, also employed this method during the creation of their YMP.

In some cases, communities addressed specific forms of diversity separately rather than combining them into a general statement. For example, Claremont, CA addresses ability separately from sexual identity with the following two statements, “Develop a mentoring program to partner disabled and non-disabled students, increasing the variety of activities involving both” and “Provide support and resources for youth dealing with sexual identity issues”.

Essentially this sub-theme sets the stage for the other sub-themes within diversity and equal representation. Next, I describe the second most prevalent sub-theme that focuses on providing low-cost options and financial support to create an inclusive environment and promote participation among households in financial need.

Sub-Theme Two: Low-Cost Options and Financial Support

The next sub-theme I identified includes community efforts to provide low-cost options and financial support. Twenty-four out of 38 communities (63%) include a statement about this in their YMP. Research supports the need for these efforts in order to ensure that all youth have access to community opportunities. Specifically, a study on youth participation in physical activities compared the experiences of low-socioeconomic status (SES) youth with high-SES youth and found that if the cost of an activity was too high, low-SES youth would not be able to participate. High-SES youth did not see cost as a critical factor for participation (Humbert et al., 2006, p. 476).

In addition, research has identified that Latino and African American families in low-income neighborhoods have limited resources for out-of-school enrichment activities and services that are often needed by adolescents who are having academic or

behavioral problems (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004, p. 111-112). For these youth, financial aid can help provide access to community programs and postsecondary educational opportunities.

Like other sub-themes I identified, communities address this topic with general philosophical statements about providing affordable programs to more specific strategies for accomplishing their goals. James City County, VA's plan includes the general statement, "Cost will not prevent children and youth from participating in programs, services, events or from visiting facilities". The plan created by Pleasanton, CA also includes a general statement to recognize affordability as a potential barrier to participation, "Some youth and adult participants do not participate in programs and services in the City because they consider the fees too high. This is especially true for families with multiple children".

Providing low-cost program options and reducing program fees for children and youth was a specific strategy recommended by several communities. For example, Albany, CA recommends, "Ensure that programs for teens are reasonable in cost and reduce the need/reliance on parental financial support". Similarly, Olmsted County, MN's plan states, "Identify and develop more affordable (inexpensive or no fee) places where kids can hang out (at least one new location open by October 2001)". In addition, James City County, VA recommends two innovative ways of lowering the

cost of programs and activities for children and youth, “A plan will be developed whereby youth who volunteer their time to work in County programs will have their fees offset”, and “Parents and youth will be encouraged to promote programs within the community in exchange for reduced fees”.

Hampton, VA’s plan includes more detail describing the reasons why affordable fees are an important strategy for the community:

In any city that is geared towards economic momentum, young people often feel left out when confronted by high sales prices and expensive goods. While many young people acquire minimum wage jobs in the city, some young people say that they don’t have time to get a job, don’t have the transportation, or their parents simply won’t let them get a job. It is unreasonable for a city to set out to lower the price of consumer goods because of the needs of a single constituency, but the Youth Focus Group identified that encouragement of affordable fares for young people in places frequented by young people (movie theaters, skating rinks, the Teen Center) would be a more practical decision. Along with a rise in youth affordability, this would be an incentive for young people to find something to do in the city instead of “hanging out” or loitering. The young people could no longer say they had nothing to do because everything was too expensive. Thus, a decrease in some fares for young people could help to increase youth involvement in asset-building activities and other positive behaviors.

Scholarship programs are also referenced by a few communities as a means to address affordability for teens. For example, James City County, VA recommends an increase in scholarships, “The amount of funds available for scholarships will be increased. Co-sponsors will be encouraged to expand their scholarship programs.

Funding will be sought from grants, organizations and the general fund”. And

Diamond Bar, CA recommends:

The Youth Master Plan Collaborative should establish a scholarship program that enables qualifying youth and their families to participate in any program, service or facility provided as a part of the Youth Master Plan. Consider the creation of a web portal for the application and approval process for scholarship funds.

Two communities recommend **partnerships to address affordability**. Santa Ana, CA recommends public-private partnerships to increase affordability of soccer programs. While El Paso County, CO recommends partnerships more generally, “Assure affordability of programs through creative partnerships and adequate tax dollar support”.

Several communities address the issues faced by low-income families through strategies that address **available income**, as well as **major expenses** such as childcare, healthcare, and higher education. The YMP for Brighton, CO offers the following explanation for this:

If Brighton’s children and youth are to thrive it is imperative that their families are thriving as well. Research on working families and poverty clearly indicates that in families where all the adults are working and yet still struggling financially, there is far less time allocated to the healthy development of their children. This in no way means that they love their children less, it means that the struggles of the adults become overwhelming and the resources won’t allow for the provision of things many families take for granted: health insurance, daycare and preschool opportunities, cultural experiences that enhance exploration and growth, time with caring adults, exposure to caring and safe neighborhoods, support with schooling and life

transitions, etc.

La Plata County, CO proposes a **livable wage ordinance** in their YMP to address the affordability for low-income families.

The guiding principle behind a living wage ordinance is simple; workers deserve to be paid at a rate that allows them to make a living and support their families. Putting that reality in the context of this Master Plan, it is impossible for La Plata County and its jurisdictions to successfully move toward thriving for all children, youth and families without exploring the wage earning realities of those citizens living and working in the county. It is also important to realize that the ability to earn a living wage is also connected to a host of other issues that impact thriving, such as childcare accessibility, health care, education and workforce development.

Brighton, CO also addresses income by recommending a service center to improve access for low-income families to **jobs and career support**:

A Center for Working Families (CWF), a model developed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation is a new model of neighborhood service delivery. Conveniently-located centers provide a supportive and resource-rich environment where low-income families can access workforce services, income supports, financial tools and services, community connections, and more. Through a new approach of outreach, coaching, and a set of bundled services, CWFs assist families in reaching their economic goals by helping them achieve stable employment and career advancement opportunities, receiving available income and work supports, and providing fairly-priced financial services within their neighborhood or the community.

Similarly, several communities focus on **financial literacy** as a means to address affordability. Manchester, CT recommends the assessment of financial literacy in the community and the provision of an appropriate financial literacy curriculum for youth and adults in the community.

Create financial literacy curricula for youth and for adults: The committee recommends that whatever curricula are selected or developed they must be based on the financial planning steps; Assessment, Setting Goals, Creating Plans, Executing and Monitoring, and Reassessment. The Human Services Department already uses the Money Matters curriculum. This is a take-home, easy to follow and understand curriculum for adults that is geared to about an 8th grade reading level. Another curriculum is the FDIC's Money Smart for Young Adults curriculum, which helps youth ages 12-20 learn the basics of handling their money and finances, including how to create positive relationships with financial institutions. Equipping young people in their formative years with the basics of financial education can give them the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to manage their finances once they enter the adult world.

Chatham County, GA also recommends a system of increasing financial literacy in order to allow low-income families to obtain economic independence:

Moreover, as indicated by a secondary fiscal agent, United Way, the FRC finds it important to equip families and the community with programs, supports and services necessary to obtain economic independence. The United Way of America cites that in order to live comfortably in today's economic hard times, a family needs to earn at least 2.5 times the federal poverty level to be considered financially stable in most communities. In Chatham County that is \$42,500 for a family of four to live self-sufficiently (StepUp Savannah Anti-Poverty Initiative, 2009). Through Employability and Work Readiness Services, as well as Case Management/Information & Referral, the Youth Futures Authority is providing an outlet to enable lower-income families and individuals to increase income, build savings, and grow assets and work towards attaining stable housing, post-secondary education or workforce training.

Several communities include recommendations concerning **affordable childcare**. For example Chesapeake, VA recommends, "Make high quality child care more affordable allowing many more Chesapeake families access to quality care for their young children". Sierra Madre, CA also addressed the issues of raising young

children by recommending the reactivation of a “toy loan program”. And La Plata County, CO includes a detailed recommendation for a childcare certificate initiative for low- and moderate-income families:

The purpose of the Child Care Certificate initiative is to allow full-time employment for those La Plata County families who can only do so if they can secure childcare or in-home support. It will provide a subsidy for families in La Plata County whose incomes are inadequate to pay for quality childcare while parents work. Unaffordable childcare forces working parents to rely upon lower cost options such as a patchwork of friends, family or unlicensed individuals for childcare when parents are working. These arrangements change frequently and are unreliable over time, and that contributes to absences from work and increases the risk of the parent being fired. It also increases the likelihood that those children will be more subjected to toxic stress which research has shown to be an indicator of problems developing in later years. This Child Care Certificate Initiative for low- and moderate-income families will stabilize the workforce, especially for entry level and younger workers, by eliminating a major cause of employee absenteeism and turnover—lack of affordable, quality, reliable childcare. It will also greatly reduce the levels of stress in these families, which in turn will save everyone much larger revenue drains later on.

Additionally, Omaha, NE recommends expanding early childhood education programs such as Head Start:

Ensure that all children eligible for Head Start receive high-quality early care and education. The 4,800 children eligible for Head Start are in the greatest need of high-quality care. These are the children who are most likely to arrive at school unprepared for learning and who will have the highest probability of dropping out of the school system. Serving these students will require expansion of high-quality early childhood educational services such as those provided through Head Start and Educare. Such an expansion would not only serve more children, it would also provide a training ground for many more professionals in the community. These efforts will require a significant expansion of Educare and Head Start funding.

Two communities focus on **healthcare affordability** as a major issue for families. El Paso County, CO recommends, “Increase the number of health care providers serving the un- or underinsured, accepting Medicaid, Medicare, and Child Health Plan+”.

And Olmsted County, MN recommends, “Increase the number of children who have affordable, accessible health care (dentistry, medical, parent education, immunizations, and prenatal care) by 3,000 by December 2001”.

Only one community refers to the **affordability of higher education**. Omaha, NE’s plan includes a recommendation for a comprehensive system of providing options for low-income youth to access higher education.

Increasing access to higher education is essential for the future of Omaha. Yet, rising costs coupled with insufficient financial assistance diminish the opportunities for youth to pursue higher education. The goal of the Financing Higher Education Initiative is to give confidence to Omaha’s graduating seniors that there will be financial resources for them to continue their education after high school at technical and professional schools, colleges, and universities.

Establish an endowed scholarship fund. Create a permanent, needs-based college scholarship program that will benefit a large of number economically disadvantaged youth in Omaha. Needs-based scholarships are a powerful means to motivate students from disadvantaged backgrounds who otherwise cannot see the promise of a college degree in their future.

Create a matching college savings account program. This program would provide a college savings account vehicle with matching funds for youth and their families to save for higher education. Families could sign a contract with the program, agreeing to contribute regular amounts to the account, participate in financial education programs, and follow other requirements. Access to the account could be restricted for a certain amount of time and the funds used only for education-related expenses. Failure to follow the contract

would mean losing match dollars.

Finally, a few communities focused on **affordable transportation**. For example, Olmsted County, MN recommends, “Develop an affordable transportation system that will meet the needs of families with young children by September 1, 2001. Free transportation for students who need it to participate in school and community activities”. And James City County, VA recommends, “The free fare program for youth riding James City County Transit will be well publicized at sites that youth frequent such as schools, libraries, parks, theaters and churches”.

As described above, communities address the issue of affordability in many different ways, including strategies that address **immediate needs** such as subsidizing program fees or eliminating them all together, as well as addressing more **systemic issues** such as income levels and job preparation. Next I describe the sub-theme that refers to focusing on *all* children and youth.

Sub-Theme Three: Focus on ALL Children and Youth

As I analyzed the YMP documents, I found that 23 out of 38 communities (61%) refer to the idea that the needs of *all* children and youth should be accommodated. Although this sub-theme often includes very general statements, it was a fairly prevalent idea that came through in the YMP language. For example, Albany, CA,

recommends, “Develop programs targeted at all youth and avoid programming for ‘labeled’ groups of youth”. Charleston, SC’s plan also includes a good example of this general language:

The [Charleston Area Youth Master Plan] does not single out any specific target group or identify at-risk youth as a focus. The intent is to provide services and resources to all youth in the Charleston area. Doing so will require a different strategy depending on the geographic area, demographics, and other statistics specific to the area of the community in which services are being provided. Therefore, it is the Planning Team’s hope that at-risk youth, youth with disabilities, and youth in low-income areas will be equally served through this Plan.

Several communities, such as Claremont, CA, include a recommendation to accommodate populations that were not already accommodated in order to include all youth, “Seek out segments of the community not currently being reached and develop action steps to include them”. Diamond Bar, CA’s plan includes similar language, “Address youth isolation: Search out those youth not engaged and connect them to their community”. Sierra Madre, CA, La Plata County, CO and Portland/Multnomah County, OR also include similar recommendations in slightly different ways:

City programs offered through the Recreation Department address some of the needs of our youth, but not all may be “age or interest” appropriate. In the last 6-8 months a concerted effort has been made to recognize needs and provide opportunities for involvement. – Sierra Madre, CA

Make sure that young people, young adults and elders are involved in the process every step of the way. Neighborhoods will need to protect against enlisting only the ‘usual cast of characters’ as their leaders. - La Plata County, CO

Teach girls about the work of firefighters through a girl's 'fire camp'. The bureau is interested in creating a fire camp for girls. Young women would learn about fire prevention and safety as well as gain exposure to a career that is typically dominated by males. This would empower girls to enter the field and increase diversity among firefighters. - Portland/Multnomah County, OR

Although this was a prevalent theme included in 61 percent of the plans, most **do not include specific strategies that indicate how the communities will accomplish the goals** regarding diversity and including *all* youth. In the next section I discuss the sub-theme “accessibility”.

Sub-Theme Four: Accessibility

I included accessibility as a sub-theme in the diversity and equal representation focus area since YMPs often communicate a belief that ensuring accessible programs and activities will reduce barriers experienced by specific populations. Research also supports this. In a study focused on physical activity participation, low-SES youth, in contrast to high-SES youth, reported that having an accessible facility close to where they live was critical in order to enable them to participate (Humbert et al., 2006, p. 475).

Seventeen out of 38 of the YMPs (45%) referred to accessibility in some way. However, in some cases, accessibility overlaps with more specific sub-themes of transportation and affordability. To avoid being redundant, I provide a general

overview of how accessibility is covered in the YMPs, without going into extensive detail about those two areas since I have described them elsewhere.

Some communities refer to accessibility in very general terms. For example, Virginia Beach, VA's plan includes the goal, "The Community is a nurturing environment in which opportunities to learn and play in safe places are available and accessible for families of all income levels".

However, in several YMPs, accessibility refers specifically to the **location of programs and services** and the ability for young people to physically get to a certain location. For example, Claremont, CA's plan includes the goal, "Increasing access to existing, as well as proposed programs (transportation and geographic location)". And Diamond Bar, CA's plan recommends:

Increase equitable distribution of services and facilities to maximize accessibility for all youth throughout all of Diamond Bar. Review and analyze partnerships that could be established to increase access to programs and services as well as facilities utilizing the Service Radius Map and its analysis.

Chesapeake, VA also refers to accessibility in terms of the location of services:

Accessibility of Services – Chesapeake is the City that cares and we want to bring services to the people. Effective human services are home, school and community-based and address the multiple needs of a variety of individuals and families. City services should be accessible, convenient, and structured to meet the values and needs of the community. The integration of services with the community would be enhanced by co-locating current services in existing neighborhood facilities, such as schools, recreation centers or libraries.

Multiple locations permit outreach to diverse and hard to reach populations.

Similarly, Virginia Beach, VA also recommends **community-based services** in order to address limited access to transportation for young people:

Lack of transportation limits access to special events and the wide array of activities in the area. Recreation centers are often not within walking distance and many areas have no continuous bike paths. Community-based activities and services are easily accessible and present opportunities to promote bonding and a sense of connection. Citizens should have a voice in deciding what services and opportunities should be available in their communities and play a role in sustaining them. Schools are often ideal locations for community-based programs and services, but there are currently no Community Schools in Virginia Beach”.

Two communities refer to accessibility in regard to the **American with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. Oakley, CA specifically recommends using accessibility standards, “Ensure that all youth events and meetings are to ADA standards”. As does Pleasanton, CA “All programs and services are designed to be inclusive and accommodate children and youth with disabilities, consistent with the federal American Disabilities Act (ADA) rules and regulations”.

Several communities recommend addressing multiple aspects of accessibility, rather than just one. For example, Thousand Oaks, CA’s plan states:

Support and encourage youth-friendly venues and facilities to creatively accommodate local youth. Consider hours of operation, safety and security, transportation, and accessibility. Explore feasibility of monetary incentive programs to encourage and financially support youth-serving business development within the City.

Similarly, Manchester, CT focuses on several aspects of accessibility:

Each facility's location and its climate are as important as its offerings. The location must be as neutral as possible. Everyone in the quadrant must have access and feel safe using the facility, both day and night. The individuals visiting the neighborhood-based centers must believe that it provides a culture and ambience that will support and help them or their families.

Although almost half of YMPs mention accessibility, I see it as a minor sub-theme that is very general and could be broken down into more specific categories such as affordability. However, it is important to include since many of the YMPs only talk about it in general terms.

In the next section I discuss the sub-theme related to providing bilingual resources in the community.

Sub-Theme Five: Bilingual Resources

A more specific way that diversity and equal representation is addressed in the YMPs was through the provision of bilingual resources to community members. Fifteen out of 38 communities (39%) reference this idea in their YMPs. However, when searching online for the actual YMP documents, I did not see any that were available in Spanish.

Nine out of the 15 communities that include a reference to providing bilingual

resources have a Hispanic population of 10 percent or more of the total population. For seven of the communities, over 20 percent of the population is Hispanic. The communities that do not include a reference to bilingual resources tend to show higher percentages of Asian and African American populations.

In addition, I compared the fifteen communities that include a reference to bilingual resources to the percent of its population that speaks English less than “very well” according to census data. The numbers range from two percent to 50 percent of the population speaking English less than “very well,” with only 7 communities showing a percentage over 10 percent. **This shows a lack of a significant relationship between the lack of English skills and the provision of bilingual resources.** In addition, there are four communities with over 20% of the population indicating that they speak English less than “very well” that do not refer to the provision of bilingual resources in their YMP.

Scholars have shown that the limited English proficiency of immigrant parents can affect their comprehension of important information regarding education, community programs, and health care services and limit their access to many needed services (Fulgini & Hardway, 2004, p. 115). These limitations can be addressed by providing information in native languages in order to ensure that the correct information is being communicated. While 39 percent of YMPs refer to the provision of bilingual

resources, most of those references include only a short statement or recommendation. For example, Pomona, CA, recommends that resources be linguistically appropriate in general, “A welcoming, family-friendly, collaborative, culturally/linguistically appropriate atmosphere at school is particularly important for Pomona’s diverse and mobile families”.

The YMPs from Santa Fe, NM, Santa Clarita, CA, Brighton, CO and Manchester, CT reference the need for a more comprehensive system of providing bilingual resources:

Bilingual services: Almost all service providers have encountered a need for bilingual and bicultural materials, staff, and services in order to serve Santa Fe’s growing immigrant population. – Santa Fe, NM

With the increased Spanish-speaking population, the need for more Spanish-speaking resources is expected, and has been expressed in the community focus groups. 58% of the respondents in this category stated that the City needed to market its programs in Spanish. Another 18% stated that a program is needed for Spanish-speaking parents to help their kids with homework. – Santa Clarita, CA

A Children, Youth and Family Master Plan must find ways to include every citizen interested in making a contribution. It cannot be a Plan that is driven only by government and professionals. This plan has a number of recommendations to involve youth, but few to involve parents. Since parents are the first line of offense when it comes to building assets in children and youth, a number of parents, both English and Spanish speaking, should be identified and trained to help build the coalition and to help train other parents. Parents have the greatest potential to reach other parents with a message of hope and strategies for raising their children more developmentally. The city should, therefore, include parents as resources to make the Developmental Assets part of the culture in Brighton. - Brighton, CO

The trend of an increasing number of limited-English speaking residents will continue, and should be addressed more formally so it can be celebrated rather than feared. To ensure this, volunteer interpreters and translators should be available for Manchester's families and for young people, both inside and outside the school system. To cover the whole community, a substantial group of community volunteers representing a wide range of international languages will be needed. Again, the proposed neighborhood-based centers are capable of becoming the hub from which these volunteers would serve. Starting gradually in the pilot quadrant will allow the network to develop and work out any inherent problems before expanding. - Manchester, CT

In contrast, other communities include recommendations for bilingual resources in specific contexts. For example, Sierra Madre, CA, focuses on childcare information, “Disburse information to caregivers in Sierra Madre both in English and in Spanish. (There are many Spanish speaking nannies in the City.)” Similarly, Santa Ana, CA recommends bilingual resources about soccer.

Annually, a community educational piece is distributed throughout the local Spanish and English language newspapers, targeting families interested in youth soccer. On the city website, as well as on television, a video in Spanish can be presented to the community so that families can get a clear idea of the breadth and scope of the soccer leagues operating in Santa Ana. Among other things, this could include information on the costs, fees, seasons and levels of play, as well as the scholarships offered and coaching credentials.

Other communities recommend specific ways for bilingual resources to be distributed. Indio, CA recommends the creation of a booklet, while Pleasanton, CA recommends the provision of training in English, “Provide educational and training

programs to serve children, youth, and adults of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, including English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) classes”.

During an interview with a staff member in Santa Fe, NM, I asked if she thought Santa Fe’s plan addressed diversity sufficiently. The interviewee stated that due to their large immigrant population, program staff members need to speak Spanish and be sensitive to different cultural norms and this is addressed briefly in the plan:

All the programs find that their populations they are serving are approximately half immigrant kids, not in every single program but in most and what that means is that the staff has to speak Spanish and be culturally sensitive and understand the kids in the families in ways be sensitive to those differences. We can tailor their programs in ways we didn’t before.

During this same interview, the staff member discussed their attempts to also involve a variety of ethnic groups, not just Latino, and provide bilingual literature that includes images of multiple ethnic groups.

“... at the teen parent center, in the beginning, we made sure there were both teen moms and dads. And we would make sure there were posters representing different racial groups or ethnic groups. We have a cooking with kids programs that has always emphasized cooking food from various cultures from around the world and now that there are more immigrant students, the materials are in Spanish for the kids and the parents and teachers.

Although most communities mentioned in this section refer to bilingual resources as a means to include non-English speaking community members and provide them with necessary information, the YMP for the Ho-Chunk Nation emphasizes the

preservation of their native language and culture, “By June 30, 1999, the Department of Education, Language Division will ensure that a language component is included in all youth activities to increase their knowledge and respect for the Ho-Chunk Nation’s traditions and customs”.

In contrast to some of the more general sub-themes such as accessibility, providing bilingual materials or language assistance is a very specific way to make community resources more accessible to the population present and potentially more welcoming and inclusive. However, since not all communities have an extensive non-English speaking population, it may not be as critical for them to provide bilingual resources.

In the next section, I describe the sixth sub-theme I identified in diversity and equal representation, the recognition of faith-based organizations.

Sub-Theme Six: Recognition of Faith-Based Organizations

Literature on ethnic and cultural marketing principles encourages making connections with cultural group leaders in order to market community programs to diverse populations (Guion, Kent, & Diehl, 2010, p. 2). Twelve out of 38 YMPs (32%) refer to faith-based organizations and often promote bridge-building with community leaders to access young people. The YMP for Albany, CA includes a very general statement to promote awareness and outreach, “Outreach to religious community, and

provide opportunities to share cultural/spiritual aspects and develop dialogue and collaborative relationships”.

Many other communities refer to the faith-based community as a **potential source of community resources** that could be shared. For example, communities such as Claremont, CA, mention faith-based organizations as a source of adult mentors for youth in the community, “Enhance the opportunities for more youth to have adult mentors in City, School district, community organization, and faith-based institutions”. Sierra Madre, CA focuses on exchanging resources between the school, church and city.

Manchester, CT and Portland/Multnomah County, OR promote **accessing hard to reach community members** by capitalizing on the existing relationships community members have with the church:

Partner with local faith-based organizations and MACC. Faith-based organizations, places of worship and the Manchester Area Conference of Churches have long histories of providing essential services to families, especially those that are sometimes hard to reach. Oftentimes, these groups have built trust with hard to reach individuals and their credibility is well respected in local neighborhoods. Manchester can sponsor “Getting to Know You” sessions in partnership with these organizations to build trust in a safe and familiar environment. - Manchester, CT

However, others have found that religious institutions are often the best way to reach immigrants and minorities, as they are trusted and seen as an authority akin to government. In the future, options for working with religious

bodies should be explored. - Portland/Multnomah County, OR

Similarly, Omaha, NE focuses on the existing relationships that religious leaders have with community members, as well as their experience and understanding for collaboration:

In recognition of the important role played by religious organizations in the Omaha community, religious leaders will be included in the Task Force process. The reasons for inviting religious leaders to participate in the Task Force process include:

- Capacity and reach. The religious community represents the strongest and most widespread system of community and social organizations in Omaha, including more than 500 churches, temples, synagogues, and houses of worship representing 66 different faith traditions.*
- Relevant experience. Outside of worship services, Omaha's faith institutions are engaged in a broad range of social programs serving adults and youth in different communities throughout the metropolitan area.*
- Precedents for collaboration. In response to community needs, both chronic and acute, a number of interfaith organizations and initiatives have emerged in Omaha, including the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, Omaha Together One Community, and Together Inc. of Metropolitan Omaha.*

In the next section, I discuss intergenerational work as a form of addressing diversity and equal representation.

Sub-Theme Seven: Intergenerational and Peer-to-Peer Work

Eleven out of 38 YMPs (29%) include recommendations focused on intergenerational programs and activities. Referring to intergenerational programs or activities does not necessarily equate to addressing the needs of diverse populations in the community. However, after reading over the recommendations I began to see how incorporating intergenerational programs would promote inclusivity and provide an incentive for additional children and youth to participate in their community by also including their adult relatives or guardians. Research shows that for many immigrant or ethnically diverse families, the importance of family obligation can be a source of motivation for young people (Fuligni & Hardway, 2004, p. 116). This cultural tradition can be incorporated into programs and activities through intergenerational work.

Three of the communities include **very general recommendations for intergenerational work**. For example, Vacaville, CA includes the goal, “To heighten awareness of specific infant and family needs through an intergenerational approach using various media forums and outlets”. And La Plata County, CO’s plan states, “Intergenerational Relationships: A DAS/O [Developmentally Attentive Systems and Organizations] recognizes that meaningful intergenerational relationships foster the development of thriving indicators and, therefore, creates opportunities where these positive relationships can occur.”

In a few cases, the peer-to-peer activities involving **different ages of children and youth** were recommended. For example, Albany, CA, “Develop mentoring/tutoring opportunities between elementary, middle and high school age youth.” In several other instances, **activities between adults and young people** were the focus.

Claremont, CA’s plan recommends, “Partner with the Committee on aging, the Senior Program staff, as well as local senior focused residential communities to implement increased intergenerational activities.” Similarly, Pomona, CA’s plan recommends:

Across Ages: Across Ages is a school- and community-based prevention program for youth 9 to 13 years that seeks to strengthen the bonds between adults and youth and provide opportunities for positive community involvement. The unique and highly effective feature of Across Ages is the pairing of older adult mentors (age 55 and above) with young adolescents, specifically youth making the transition to middle school. The program employs mentoring, community service, social competence training, and family activities to build youths’ sense of personal responsibility for self and community. Evaluations of Across Ages showed decreased alcohol and tobacco use, increased school attendance, decreased suspensions from school and improved grades, improved attitudes toward school and the future, and improved attitudes toward adults in general and older adults in particular.

In other YMPs, intergenerational relationships were described in the context of **family communication programs**, as in Pleasanton, CA, “Support positive family communication to foster strong intergenerational relationships within families and the community”. And in Temecula, CA:

Provide activities/contests/etc. for teens and parents to engage in together. Enhance outreach efforts for current teen parenting workshops or support groups for parents that encourage understanding of youth culture and supporting issues regarding youth-to-adulthood transition. Provide training for parents on how to speak and communicate with their youth and teen

children.

Research on intergenerational relationships between older adults and youth show many positive benefits for youth (Rogers & Taylor, 1997, p. 138; van Vliet--, 2008, p. 15). Although only 27 percent of the YMPs refer to intergenerational opportunities, it may be a potential area for research and program development within communities.

These seven sub-themes include all of the ways that the YMP documents refer to diversity and equal representation. In the next section I discuss what staff and community members thought about their YMPs in terms of diversity and equal representation, discovered during my phone interviews.

Community Reflections

During the interviews with city staff community members, I asked whether they thought the plans addressed the needs of diverse youth in the community. A staff member from Santa Clarita, CA expressed that their YMP did when it was created five years ago, but an update is needed:

The answer is yes and no. When I say yes, when the plan was created, it addressed the community at the time. And when I say no, I would say the last update was five years ago, so we are probably due for another update, based on current circumstances to address the diversity issues that we see in the community. This city is one of the fastest growing cities in California. In terms of its square miles, it's huge. It's 55 square miles. So it will literally take you a half hour to get from one end of town to the other. So I would say, because it's growing fast, and because it's very large, very suburban, that we

constantly need to address diversity issues. And I'll give you a couple examples.

Example one is that five years ago, the Korean population wasn't on our radar. And it was beginning to show up on the school radar, but just barely. It's now very much at the forefront of the school community's. I would say now there are at least two schools that are becoming at least 50 % Korean because of the quality of the schools out here. So that's something we now need to adjust for. The other example would be... and when you say diversity I don't think just racial diversity, I think community diversity. We see a growing population of special needs kids out here, particularly in the autism areas. So our efforts in the area of inclusion need to be addressed better as well.

An additional interview with a staff member in Santa Clarita, CA revealed a similar assessment of their plan:

In my opinion, it comprehensively addresses a variety of groups, demographics, ages, types of services. I think it is pretty far reaching. Teens, parents, children, there's law enforcement, there's substance abuse. So kind of the whole gamut of services in terms of the types of services either the city provides or the services that are available in the community.

A staff member in Palo Alto, CA stated that their plan does not speak to diversity directly, but in general terms. This has worked for them but could also be problematic if it results in certain youth being left out:

I don't think [the Palo Alto Youth Master Plan] really speaks specifically to that but I think that what I like about it is that it talks about youth in general. So it doesn't say that when we talk about youth we mean, x, y or z. We're just trying to encompass everybody in terms of health and education and those important aspects of it. I think it has its goods and its bads. Because you don't want anyone to fall through the cracks and if you don't specify, there is the potential for that to happen.

One of things we've noticed is that we are big on the developmental assets here in Palo Alto. So as we delve into that, we look at who's doing what for

whom. We have noticed that the gap starts to widen with the high school students. So not only do the assets start to decrease as we've seen with the Search Institute numbers, but as we look at our community, we're saying, 'well the schools are doing a lot'. When kids are in the school there are a lot of opportunities. But the after-school time, which is harder to program for high-school students, there was less of it. So one of the things we are really looking at is trying to increase that to make sure we are giving the same resources to all aged youth. And again, we don't spell it out too much in the youth master plan, we talk more about youth in general. But I think that is good because it allows us to encompass everyone and it allows us to encompass who needs it. We can find where the needs are and address them. So I do think it is a little vague in that way but I think it has worked to our advantage.

An interview with a staff member in Santa Fe, NM revealed something similar. Their goals regarding diversity are very general, which allows them to change their strategies as they need to, "These are very general goals and that is nice because they are flexible. The people we work with have changed. The people who we thought we could work with and the people we actually have collaborations with have changed".

In general, staff members in the communities I interviewed thought their plan did a fairly good job of addressing the needs of diverse members of their community. However, the interviewees also revealed that it is important to update the plans regularly to address a rapidly changing population. Although I found that many communities refer to diversity and representation issues in very general terms, two of the communities thought that this was appropriate for them since it allowed them flexibility to change the specific strategies to serve their immediate needs.

Next I describe what staff members thought about the representation of youth involved in the YMP creation process.

Equal Representation During the Creation of the Youth Master Plans

During the interviews I asked about the diversity of youth who participated in the YMP creation process. Interestingly, the staff member I interviewed in Brighton, CO indicated that a very diverse group of students participated, while the college student who herself participated as a high-school student during the creation process did not agree completely.

There was a Hispanic kid, there was, I hate to say this, a black girl, a white girl. For adults, there was a Hispanic female, a white male and female. It was long ago. Yeah, there was diversity. You know the kids, even just as far as their social groups, they were different kids. There was what you would consider a goth kid, there was a jock, there was a band guy, they were all different. The adults didn't outnumber the teenagers and the teenagers didn't outnumber the adults. It was all the same. So it was definitely diverse. And that's how we try to keep our commission, because if you have all the same kind of kids, from the same kind of background, same kind of families, you're not going to be coming up with very good ideas.

In this same interview, the staff member explained that the creation process of the YMP led to the inclusion of different youth needs:

They had seven different boards. One was community safety, one was health, one was youth in transition, and one was education. So they covered all these different areas and focused on the needs of the community, what it was lacking, what it needed to make it a better, more youth and family friendly community and that's how all the ideas came forth, and I think it was really good. For instance, in our committee, the youth in transition, we had

probation officers come in and talk about youth that go through the system. What they need, what will benefit them. We had social workers come in and talk about foster kids and the adoption kids that are in here. We had college counselors and high school counselors come in and talk about kids transitioning out of high school into college. And so we really got a huge variety of the representation of any type of youth in transition and what the community is lacking or what it needs. So I think it covers a lot.

During my interview with the former high-school student from Brighton, she revealed that the youth who participated were not as diverse as the staff member may have thought.

Well, I think we should have gotten some of the youth input. This is written by some of us youth, you know, and it was well written and all but I think everybody that was involved, had a similar background. We all came from the same perspective and we all had the same ideas. And I think we could have reached out more and gotten different perspectives that we don't have.

When I asked her which youth perspectives were not included, she responded that younger students including elementary-age, were not included and only two middle-school girls participated on the master plan committee.

My interview with a consultant for Santa Fe, NM revealed that they also tried to include a diverse group of youth to create their YMP. "I think we did. The focus groups and kid interviews were all to a large extent trying to address the needs of diverse population groups".

Unfortunately, because many of the YMPs were created several years earlier and the youth who participated were not necessarily involved at the time of my research, I was not able to conduct additional interviews with youth participants. However, because of the difference in opinion between the former high-school student and staff member in Brighton, I recommend that communities consistently check in with youth about who needs to be at the table.

As I described earlier, research shows that youth do not necessarily want to represent the views of other youth. Since it is impossible to involve everyone in a community process, ensuring that a diverse sample of children and youth are included will be necessary to prevent a tokenistic process. However, this ideal is not easy. In a 2006 article, staff in Hampton, VA revealed that one of their initial challenges was to engage a group of diverse youth who represented the youth in the community and could provide a youth perspective on the opportunities and barriers they face (Carlson, 2006).

Conclusion

All 38 of the YMPs that I reviewed in the content analysis process incorporate a reference to population diversity and equal representation. Through content analysis, I identified seven sub-themes among these references that ranged from general philosophical beliefs to specific strategies. These include:

- Awareness and inclusion of diverse populations (included in 84% of the plans)
- Low cost options and financial support (included in 63% of the plans)
- Focus on *all* youth (included in 61% of the plans)
- Accessibility (included in 45% of the plans)
- A provision of bilingual resources (included in 39% of the plans)
- Recognition of faith-based organizations (included in 32% of the plans)
- Intergenerational and peer-to-peer work (included in 29% of the plans)

Among the sub-themes, there is an interesting difference in how diversity is addressed. For some communities, they purposefully avoid targeting specific populations of young people, preferring instead to **accommodate *all populations***. Other communities indicate a desire to **accommodate specific populations that are underserved**. And still other communities specifically identify **which populations they want to target** with their programs and services. Although the communities in which I conducted interviews indicate that more general goals regarding diversity were sufficient to accommodate their needs, this is an area that warrants further research.

Additionally, what is best could be different depending on the specific community

governance structure in place and how easily strategies can be implemented or changed as population demographics change. Although 61 percent of the plans focus on *all* youth, most **do not include specific strategies** that indicate how the communities will accomplish the goals regarding diversity and including *all* youth. Yet, if a community only indicates a general goal to involve diverse populations in the community and address their needs, at some point they will need to identify specific strategies to ensure they actually accomplish those goals.

Many of the sub-themes I identified within diversity and equal representation are related to sub-themes under the physical environment and the youth participation focus areas. For example, the accessibility sub-theme includes issues related to the physical environment such as the physical location of facilities. In addition, many of the specific strategies **address barriers** often faced by children, youth and families such as low income levels, access to transportation, and language barriers. Addressing these barriers is important in order to enable people facing those issues to participate in community life.

One area that is not significantly addressed is **marketing the programs and services available to diverse populations**. Some communities highlight a general desire to promote programs for children and youth in the community, recommend providing bilingual information, and also discuss working with the faith-based community to

gain access to diverse children, youth and families. However, many communities do not include these recommendations in the YMP.

According to the University of Florida Extension Service, ethnic marketing best practices include valuing the cultural uniqueness of the group and their cultural beliefs, symbols, practices, differences in languages and social conduct; valuing cooperation and bridge-building across cultures; and valuing word-of-mouth and interpersonal communication (Guion, Kent, & Diehl, 2010, p. 2). Although most of these ideas were not included in the YMPs, this is an area where communities could expand their strategies based on the specific demographics and cultural preferences of their community.

In the following chapter, I summarize my study on youth master planning, identify future directions for research, and discuss the implications for both research and practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT:

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Through the use of multiple methods I was able to gain an in-depth look at what YMPs include and how communities are using them around the United States. In addition to providing a general overview, I specifically focused on how plans address three areas: **youth participation**, the **physical environment**, and **diversity/equal representation**. In this concluding chapter, I briefly discuss what I found, what future research is warranted, and the potential implications for research and practice.

General Findings

In general, YMPs are a fairly new type of plan, with the earliest created in 1990. One of the main reasons communities create a YMP is to improve the general quality of the community for young people. Other reasons include: to facilitate the implementation of programs for the youth council in a community; to address specific issues like youth violence or truancy; as a special project of community leaders; and to coordinate child and youth services and efforts in the community.

Roughly half of the communities I evaluated during this study hired consultants to help write and/or facilitate the creation process for their plan. Some communities need help determining what they want or what will be useful to include in a YMP and some need help actually writing the plan. Other communities have available staff members who can write plans and facilitate the engagement process.

Almost all of the plans include general components such as a table of contents, goals, objectives, and strategies or action items. However, fewer YMPs include components such as a description of the community demographics, an implementation plan, indicators of success, an assessment or evaluation plan, or a spatial plan or map. In addition, very few communities indicate that their plan is enforceable, through which people or groups in the community could be held responsible for implementing or abiding by the strategies in the plan.

Through a content analysis of 38 YMPs, I identified 12 major topic areas referenced in the plans. The following list includes these areas in order of the number of YMPs that include them. Some communities cover these areas in depth, while others only include a brief statement about the topic.

- 1. Youth participation (38 plans)*
- 2. Diversity and equal representation (38 plans)*

3. *Physical environment (37 plans)*
4. *Collaboration and coordination (36 plans)*
5. *Monitoring and evaluation (34 plans)*
6. *Information dissemination about programs and resources in the community (33 plans)*
7. *Training or programs for adults (30 plans)*
8. *Child and youth development (30 plans)*
9. *Safety (non-physical environment related) (27 plans)*
10. *School or education (26 plans)*
11. *Funding for programs (26 plans)*
12. *Health (mental and physical) (6 plans)*

A detailed analysis of all of these areas was not within the scope of this study and is an area for future research.

Potential Overlap with Other Community Plans

YMPs focus on a specific population group, young people, rather than a topic area, such as transportation, land use, housing, or parks and recreation. Since many communities have plans focused on those and other topic areas, there is a potential for redundancy or significant overlap if YMPs refer to those same topic areas in detail. However, if other community plans do not address the specific needs, barriers, and

interests of children, youth and families, it raises the question about whether a community is doing all it can to improve conditions and become a child- and youth-friendly community.

Through my evaluation of YMPs, I found few examples of how YMPs might overlap with other plans a community might have. In most cases, YMPs only mention these topics very generally. For example, Santa Clarita, CA is a community that has a separate parks and recreation master plan. Although the YMP for Santa Clarita addresses the physical environment, it doesn't include many specific recommendations related to parks and recreation.

A topic area not typically discussed in other community plans is youth participation in everyday community life and in community governance. Through my evaluation, I found that this is one of the most prevalent focus areas for YMPs and all 38 YMPs I analyzed refer to this idea in some capacity. Although I think there are several reasons for the inclusion of this topic, by including it, YMPs are able to stand out from other types of plans and make a unique contribution to the wellbeing of children and youth in the community.

However, many communities do not include separate plans about all topics relevant to children and youth in a community. For example, through a quick search online, I

found that approximately nine communities with YMPs also had parks and recreation type plans. Therefore, covering those topics in the YMPs may be important to ensure all issues and relevant ideas are addressed in the community. I discuss this in more detail in the “further research” section of this chapter.

Asset-Based Model

The YMPs generally take an asset-based approach to addressing the needs of children and youth in the community. For example, I did not see restrictive policies in the YMPs related to limiting the use of spaces by establishing curfews and putting other restrictions on young people. Instead, many of the plans recommend celebrating what children and youth have to offer and focus on their assets rather than their deficits.

Twenty-five of the 38 YMPs I analyzed refer to a model or framework that the community follows. These models either provide the normative framework about children and youth or a more practical framework for developing strategies that accomplish a community’s goals. Although communities referred to six different frameworks in the YMP documents, by far the most common was the Search Institute’s 40 developmental assets. The Search Institute is based on youth development, resiliency and prevention and provides a widely used list of 40 developmental assets (<http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets>). Just over half (20 out of 38) of the YMPs reference the Search Institute.

The focus on assets may also be related to the focus on youth participation in community governance. By recommending opportunities for youth to participate in community leadership, communities are essentially recognizing the ability and value that youth bring to the table. Since all 38 of the YMPs include a reference to youth participation in community governance, it is not surprising that over half of them also reference the Search Institute's asset-based model.

Coordination and Collaboration

Building connections between departments or agencies within a community is one of the major goals and significant outcomes that communities reported. Through multiple questions in the questionnaire, communities expressed the need to involve more stakeholders and cooperate with other agencies around youth issues. In fact, this was the most common focus area identified by communities that completed the questionnaire and the fourth most prevalent theme that I found through the content analysis. In addition, communities cited this as the second most common outcome of creating the YMP.

Communities also recommend significant collaboration and coordination to other communities wanting to create their own YMP. For example, eleven of the 22 communities that gave recommendations suggested involving more stakeholders in

the creation process. In addition, four communities suggested obtaining memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between different entities and getting support and buy-in from community leaders. Although I determined that this was a major area addressed by YMPs, I recommend a more detailed analysis of this topic in the section on future research.

The Involvement of Planners and Landscape Architects

Although scholars such as Checkoway (1994) espouse the idea that planners are “strategically situated to promote youth participation in planning,” I found that planners and landscape architects, professionals who typically write plans, aren’t as involved in their creation as I had anticipated. Since the majority of YMPs are overseen by departments that focus on children, youth and families, human services, or administrative departments, and planners and landscape architects are not usually staff members within those departments, there may be a greater need to hire consultants who know how to write effective plans. A potential alternative option could be that planners and landscape architects already on staff within a community take on a larger role in the development of a youth master plan.

Many of the YMPs do not include plan components such as implementation tasks, evaluation and monitoring strategies, indicators of success, and spatial plans or maps. Perhaps if planners and landscape architects, who are aware of these typical master

plan components, take a larger part in writing YMPs, they may be able to add to the quality of the plans. In addition, although all of the YMPs include at least one reference to the physical environment, most plans only refer to it in very general terms. Since this is usually an area of expertise for planners and landscape architects, they would be able to include more specific strategies related to the physical environment to create a better community for children and youth. In addition, other professionals who focus on the physical environment such as environmental groups and public works staff, were involved to a very limited degree in the YMP creation process, and in most cases were not involved at all.

Operationalizing Goals

Most of the YMPs include recommended or expected outcomes related to their goals. In addition, the majority of plans include strategies to help accomplish certain goals. However, many of these strategies do not include other information about who or what department/group will be held responsible for doing it, when it should be completed, and what indicates success. This finding is similar to that found through research in Australia. Researchers identified that a significant barrier to youth participation in government processes is the difficulty in acting upon outcomes of participation and the tendency to design and implement a participation process without significant follow-through to accomplish the goals and objectives identified during the process (Vromen & Collin, 2010, p. 103).

In addition, for most YMPs these details are not included for many of the topic areas covered. This may be appropriate if the plan is to be solely a visionary document that sets the direction for a community but is not intended to be useable as a guide for how to accomplish the goals. Although it varies by YMP, I found the goals related to the physical environment described in general terms without being operationalized more often than goals related to youth participation and diversity/equal representation. Again this may relate to the lack of participation by professionals focused on improving the physical environment.

A number of communities recognize the need to operationalize their goals and put them in quantifiable terms that enables staff or community members to determine if and when they are accomplished. For example, Chesapeake, VA includes the following recommendation:

Outcome, Evaluation and Time: All services should have a specific, desired outcome. The outcome should be measurable such as reduction of teen pregnancy, reduction of truancy or increase in the percentage of 9th grade African American males that graduate four years later. Process measures such as the number of persons served, while important, are not in and of themselves sufficient measures of the impact of a service. The Chesapeake Coordinating Group for Youth Services should identify what trends they want to impact, create or reconfigure a service/program to get the changes desired, and define specific outcome measures for that service and assure they are measured and reported. Change, especially change in long standing behavior, often takes years and the City Administration and the City Council need to adopt a multi-year approach to the evaluation of success. It is important longitudinal data be collected for a 6-7 year period.

Yet, several of the communities that recognize this, also indicate that determining measurable outcomes or indicators is something to do in the future as the plan gets implemented rather than something to include in the YMP. Unfortunately, leaving this step to complete in the future may mean that it never gets completed if priorities and funding areas shift over time.

Evaluation and Regular Updating

In order for YMPs to remain relevant as a community changes, they need to be regularly evaluated and updated. According to my questionnaire results, 15 out of 26 communities indicate that they currently monitor or evaluate their plan and an additional nine communities indicate that they intend to evaluate their plan in the future. However, through my own read of the YMPs, only nine of the 38 YMPs include specific strategies or recommendations for evaluating their plan. In addition, *evaluating* the plan and *updating* the plan do not seem to be directly linked as only three of the 30 communities that completed the questionnaire indicate that they have a regular schedule for updating the plan and two of those communities indicate that the update is to happen every 6 to 10 years.

A staff member in Palo Alto, CA who I interviewed also expressed a need for a more clearly defined agenda for evaluating and updating.

I would spell it out a little bit more, in terms of renewing, what that process looks like. [Our youth master plan] does talk about the youth council looking at the plan every other year. But I think for it to be relevant, now and into the future, beyond myself or the youth council that is currently here, it needs to spell out what that [evaluation process] would definitely look like.

I would definitely ask anyone who is writing one of these, how often does it get looked at, and when it does, what is the process? If there are changes to be made, do they just make them or who should be involved in that? Who should know about the changes? I definitely think that is an important part of keeping these things up to date and in front of everyone in the community.

Since this need for additional evaluation and updating was also brought up in other interviews, I recommend that YMPs include a detailed outline for the evaluation and updating process. Unfortunately, at least one community that does include a plan for evaluation has not used it after five years. Brighton, CO's plan includes a scorecard intended to assist staff in determining what recommendations have been accomplished. However, according to the staff member I interviewed, the scorecard has not yet been completed due to the lack of staff and funding.

In addition, a critical component of evaluation and monitoring is the involvement of young people. Although, 19 out of 24 communities that indicate they either currently or intend to monitor their YMP also indicate that youth are involved in the process, this should be outlined directly in the plan document to ensure that it happens.

In the next sections, I discuss my findings for each of my three focus areas: youth participation, the physical environment, and diversity/equal representation.

Findings Within the Three Focus Areas

Youth Participation

Youth participation is the largest topic area covered by YMPs. All 38 plans I analyzed refer to this concept. Within the 38 plans, I identified two major categories of youth participation opportunities: **participation in everyday community life**; and **participation in community governance**. These two categories are covered by a similar number of plans (37 and 35 respectively) and include a similar number of references (525 and 497 respectively). This finding is reflected in the recommendations of Barry Percy-Smith that participation focuses not just on community decision-making, but also promotes “active citizenship in everyday life” and includes opportunities for participation in settings such as home, school, and neighborhood (Percy-Smith, 2010, p. 109).

Specifically, 37 YMPs refer to participation opportunities in everyday community life that I divided into the following sub-themes:

- *Recreation and social activities (35 plans)*
- *Employment and career preparation (31 plans)*

- *Volunteering and community service (21 plans)*
- *Participation in the creation of media messages (5 plans)*

Thirty-five of the YMPs refer to participation opportunities in community governance that I divided into the following sub-themes:

- *Community decision-making (29 plans)*
- *Youth/student councils (27 plans)*
- *Development of leadership skills (24 plans)*
- *Participation in creating the YMP (21 plans)*
- *Conducting research or evaluation (5 plans)*

Despite this broad number of categories, I found several topics that YMPs do not cover in depth or that may need to be re-evaluated. Based on research literature, I recommend that communities carefully consider these areas and potentially include them in future plans.

The first topic involves **recruiting diverse youth to participate**. Two of the communities that I interviewed refer to challenges in getting a wide range of youth to participate either in the creation of their YMP or in on-going participation opportunities. Although the YMPs mention a desire to recruit additional young people to participate in community opportunities, the plans generally omit specific strategies

for addressing this critical issue. It is unfortunately not enough to have a desire to involve diverse youth without a specific plan for how it can be done effectively. Although targeting specific populations of young people is important in encouraging diverse participation, Naim, Sligo, & Freeman (2006) warn against recruiting only the exceptional and distinctly under-represented youth and excluding or forgetting the “ordinary” youth.

A second area is **better communication about existing or new opportunities** available to young people. Many YMPs include this as a goal within multiple sub-themes. From jobs to social activities, children and youth need to know what is going on in the community in order to participate and it should not be taken for granted that youth will know information about what is going on.

A third area often related to communicating opportunities is **youth participation in the creation of media messages**. This idea is only referenced in five of the YMPs. Bennett (2008, p. 19) recommends making information sources interactive by involving the audience (the youth) in editing and evaluating the production of information. Therefore, the potential of youth engagement through digital media should be explored as a possible strategy that can address the need for better communication and marketing. In addition, creating digital media can enable youth to develop skills in “cutting edge” technology. Research shows that “dynamic and

creative engagement” approaches are likely more effective in engaging young people (Elsley, 2004, p.161). Therefore, opportunities to create digital media could be an effective way to engage youth in a community.

In my personal experience media, such as a website to communicate opportunities within a community, should be designed by youth and supported by a permanent adult structure. Because website hosting and maintenance requires a commitment of ongoing time and money, city governments or non-profit organizations can ensure continuity as individual youth graduate or move on to other projects.

In addition, adults can help youth ensure that their media messages will appeal to and reach a large youth audience. Adults often have knowledge of community resources and have access to networks that youth may not be aware of. Teaching youth the skills to access these resources and introducing them to important people can often enable youth to create a better final product.

In a project I worked on, youth in a high school web-design course created a website intended as a community youth portal. Unfortunately, the youth did not have the time or existing connections with other youth groups to field test it and get other opinions. However, when we showed it to other youth who were part of different socioeconomic groups, it did not appeal to them and they had many criticisms of the

website. Ideally, we would have facilitated a larger community presentation to gain feedback on the website before the course was over and the youth who worked on it moved on to summer activities.

A fourth area that is not addressed by most YMPs is **youth participation in unstructured activities or “hanging out”**. While there is research to support the idea that youth need a chance to hang out and socialize with friends (Larson, 2000, p. 173), there is also research to indicate that unstructured activities may have undesirable effects on youth (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000, p. 119). Most of the participation opportunities recommended in the YMPs include structured activities. However, given the contradicting research on this topic, communities may want to conduct research with their own youth population to determine the specific situation.

The last two areas are included in many YMPs but are topics that may require communities to evaluate and re-structure them to ensure they accomplish the intended goals. Many plans include a recommendation for the **creation or continuation of a youth council**. Yet, despite the support for youth councils and the prevalence of them as formats for participation in community governance, available research findings are mixed and do not involve youth councils in the United States context. Scholars have argued that approaches for consultation, such as youth councils, are exclusive and are accessible only to well-resourced youth who have been encouraged to participate and

become leaders (Vromen, 2008, p. 5). Similarly, a study in Australia looking at inclusion and diversity in government decision-making recommends limiting the processes that call for representative young people and to encourage youth from diverse backgrounds to speak from their own experiences rather than ‘represent’ other young people (Bell, Vromen, & Collin, 2008, p. 13).

In other research, youth expressed mixed feelings about youth councils as formats for consultation, exhibiting a split between youth who participated in youth councils and held generally positive opinions of them, and youth who did not participate in them and held generally negative views of them (Stafford et al., 2003, p. 368). In order for communities to be confident in recommending youth councils as an equitable format for youth participation in community governance, an evaluation of existing youth councils may be beneficial.

A similar idea that warrants additional evaluation is **youth participation on adult community boards**. Despite the prevalence of recommendations for this in the YMPs, research primarily conducted in countries other than the United States questions whether this is an effective means of youth participation in decision-making. A few of the communities with YMPs identify some of the logistical issues that this strategy presents, such as the timing of meetings and the lack of space on adult boards for significant youth representation. Since some communities have

already established the practice of youth membership on adult community boards, it should be possible to determine if it actually facilitates meaningful youth participation in community decision-making.

Physical Environment

Researchers such as Gill (2008) endorse policies for child- and youth-friendly communities that focus on the physical environment. Gill reasons that space-oriented policies include direct and indirect interventions, enabling children and youth to experience their community and “ grow and adapt through their own experiences” (p. 138).

Although 37 out of 38 of the YMPs refer to the physical environment, they generally do not take a space-oriented approach, as most tend to provide only general recommendations regarding the physical environment. Although general recommendations are more likely to remain relevant over several years, it may be a missed opportunity for communities to facilitate the creation of child- and youth-friendly community spaces and incorporate elements that will provide a welcoming environment for young people. The design and layout of the physical environment is a critical component of a child- and youth-friendly city. Yet, very few communities include specific design recommendations or describe the characteristics of places that would appeal to and be used by children and youth. Therefore, YMPs need to provide

recommendations that are specific enough to get things accomplished and are updated frequently to address changes in the community.

I found that YMPs include the following seven sub-themes related to the physical environment:

- *Spaces to be used by children and youth (35 plans)*
- *Transportation (27 plans)*
- *Safety related to the physical environment (22 plans)*
- *Place attachment and community connection (10 plans)*
- *Natural Environment (6 plans)*
- *Public Art (2 plans)*

However, I also identified several ideas missing from most YMPs. One is the **involvement of youth in the design process**. Researchers have promoted youth as design participants to inform design decisions and increase a sense of ownership and responsibility regarding community spaces (Owens, 2002, p. 161). In addition, research has found that formal play and leisure places designed for young people are not always used as they are intended, which can cause tension between young people and the agencies that oversee those places (Elsley, 2004, p.157). In order to address these issues, YMPs could incorporate recommendations for participatory design with children and youth. From my own experience working with children to re-design part

of their school playground, I found that children's ideas about what they want do not necessarily match the ideas of a designer. If communities do not ensure children and youth are involved in the design process, community spaces designed for young people may not be as successful as they could be.

YMPs also discuss very little about **informal hang out spaces** for teens, such as sidewalks, streets, and plazas. While these spaces are not designed specifically for teens to use, the inclusion of teen-friendly elements such as benches can often create spaces that are more welcoming and accommodating to their needs. These informal spaces should also allow teens to be by themselves.

Teenagers who hang out in public spaces may be harassed or asked to leave. During a project I facilitated, a teenager made a digital story about the lack of free community hang out spaces available to young people, especially during the cold winter months. He often resorted to hanging out at the local bus station with his friends but they were asked to leave since they were not there to simply wait for the bus. Communities may need to address a similar issue in order to ensure that teens have a safe space in which they feel comfortable and are welcome.

Another missing component of YMPs is a **map or physical plan** showing the location of specific elements in the community. Only three of the 38 YMPs include a

map or plan of the community. Although communities undoubtedly have maps within other community plans such as a comprehensive plan, it is surprising that almost no maps are included in the YMPs I analyzed. However, many of the topics discussed, such as transportation, could be more clearly articulated and strategized using a spatial representation of the community. When combined with issues such as youth-friendly access and the equitable distribution of facilities and services, evaluating the spatial relationships within the community will be beneficial.

YMPs do not generally include references to the **natural environment**. Only six YMPs mention the natural environment and recommend the development of an environmental ethic related to accessing nature, preserving open space, recycling, environmental clean-up activities, and environmental education. However, this is an area of current research that communities will want to explore. As additional research findings become available about the benefits of providing access to nature for children and youth, YMPs will ideally start to incorporate these ideas into their strategies and recommendations.

Finally, 22 YMPs refer to **safety**, yet none of them include specific recommendations about changes to the physical environment that will improve safety. Research on children's play and recreation in Bangladesh found that good lighting, which can often contribute to a sense of safety, was particularly important in playgrounds and

amusement parks and was the second most important element found in parks for the 499 children interviewed in the study (Ahmed & Sohail, 2008, p. 267). In order to create a safer community, I suggest that more specific recommendations be included in the YMPs to address safety issues in the physical environment.

Diversity and Equal Representation

All 38 of the YMPs I analyzed include a reference to population diversity and equal representation. I identified seven sub-themes among these references that range from general philosophical beliefs to specific strategies. These include:

- *Awareness and inclusion of diverse populations (32 plans)*
- *Low cost options and financial support (24 plans)*
- *Focus on all youth (23 plans)*
- *Accessibility (17 plans)*
- *A provision of bilingual resources (15 plans)*
- *Recognition of faith-based organizations (12 plans)*
- *Intergenerational work (11 plans)*

Many of the sub-themes within diversity and equal representation are related to sub-themes under the physical environment and the youth participation focus areas. For example, the accessibility sub-theme includes issues related to the physical

environment such as the physical location of facilities. In addition, many of the specific strategies related to diversity and equal representation address barriers faced by children, youth and families, such as low income levels, access to transportation, and language skills. Addressing these barriers is important in order to enable people facing them to participate in the community.

One area of diversity and equal representation not significantly addressed in the YMPs is **marketing the programs and services** to marginalized populations. Although some communities include a general desire to promote programs for children and youth in the community, include recommendations for providing bilingual information, and include recommendations to work with the faith-based community to gain access to diverse populations, most communities do not. Research has found that in order to market programs to a diverse audience, it is important to value the cultural uniqueness of the group and their cultural beliefs, symbols, practices, difference in languages and social conduct; promote cooperation and bridge-building across cultures; and use word-of-mouth and interpersonal communication (Guion, Kent, & Diehl, 2010, p. 2). Although most of these ideas were referenced in a few of the YMPs, this is an area where communities could expand their strategies based on the specific demographics and cultural preferences of the community.

Related to this is the fact that 23 out of 38 YMPs include a general goal of engaging *all* young people, but most **do not include specific strategies that indicate how the communities will accomplish that goal**. Yet, if a community indicates a general goal to involve diverse populations in the community and address their needs, at some point they will need to identify specific strategies to ensure they actually accomplish those goals. Communities need to decide what works best for their governance structure. However, it may be beneficial to determine some of the specific strategies during the creation process of the YMP so that they benefit from the input of multiple stakeholders. In addition, having those strategies in an adopted plan may make them easier to justify and actually accomplish down the road.

In addition to the general findings and specific described above, I developed a list of YMP components that may improve their effectiveness in addressing these topics. In the next section I describe these components.

Recommended YMP Components

The National League of Cities (NLC) “Action Kit on Creating a YMP” (Borut & Johnson, n.d.) recommends five common components of a YMP and includes a short paragraph describing each of them:

- A clear vision statement;
- A summary of the planning process;

- Key findings on community strengths and unmet needs;
- Major goals or targets; and
- A plan of action to achieve these goals including next steps, roles and responsibilities, and a timeline.

Although this is a good list, it does not provide as much detail on each component as communities may need. In addition, I recommend additional components that should be included. My list is based on the experience of communities that already include the components in their YMP, as well as components that communities recommend based on a deficit in their own plan or something they learned over time. These recommendations are also based on my knowledge of the planning literature and my professional experience as a practicing landscape architect and planner.

Some of these components are very straightforward, such as a table of contents, so I have not provided an extensive explanation. Others, such as an implementation plan, are not as universally understood, so I provided a detailed explanation, and in one case, an example from a YMP.

1. ***Table of Contents*** – Although very short plans may not require a table of contents, plans that have several sections will benefit from having an

organized outline at the beginning to help make the plan easier to read and search for different sections.

2. **Acknowledgements** – An acknowledgment of who was involved in the creation process, what department or community entity oversees the plan, the person/people to contact about questions, and other key stakeholders involved should be included. Acknowledgements not only recognize people who helped write the plan but also provide a way to contact the main authors or facilitators in case there is a turnover in staff or information becomes lost.
3. **Background Research** – In order to connect research to practice, an explanation of recent literature on a specific topic is important to include. The inclusion of research findings not only provides justification for recommendations included in the YMP, but also enables a community to become aware of the experiences and examples in other contexts.
4. **Community Description** – YMPs should include a description of the current community demographics and an overview of the positive and negative aspects of the community. If an asset-based model is used, an inventory of those assets may be helpful in generating a clear picture of what the community is like for children, youth and families and what areas need to be improved upon. The community description may be combined with a description of the impetus for creating the YMP.

5. ***Impetus for Creating the YMP*** – A description of the main reason(s) to create the plan or what the community hopes to accomplish will provide the framework for the goals and objectives outlined in the plan. This can also set the stage for developing an appropriate monitoring or evaluation protocol. Communities can measure if they are successful based on the reasons for creating the YMP.
6. ***Audience or Intended Users*** – A description of the intended users of the plan can ensure that those people have a clear understanding of the plan's intent. For example, if a community creates a YMP with the intention that its youth council will help ensure the goals stated in the plan are accomplished, that should be clearly outlined in case a change in leadership and/or staff turnover results in limited knowledge about the plan. In addition, if the plan is to be used and implemented by youth, the language level used in the plan should reflect that.
7. ***Description of the Engagement Process*** – A description of which stakeholders were involved in the creation process for the plan will provide a good check for communities to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved and that children and youth are included in meaningful ways. In addition, a description of the activities used to involve stakeholders may be helpful in informing future involvement that is facilitated by the community

and other groups. A checklist will be especially useful since many communities indicated the desire to include additional stakeholders.

8. ***Vision*** – A critical component of a YMP is a vision for what the community wants to become or wants to accomplish with the plan.
9. ***Goals (short-term and long-term)*** – Goals should be included that, if accomplished, will lead to the realization of the vision. Since most YMPS are usually designed to be relevant over a number of years, both short-term goals that can be accomplished immediately or within a year, and long-term goals that can be accomplished over multiple years should be included.
10. ***Objectives*** – Objectives should be included that describe what will be accomplished under each goal. Objectives should be quantifiable and unambiguous in order to determine when they have been accomplished.
11. ***Strategies or Action Items*** – Strategies or action items should be included for each objective so that there is a specific task that can be accomplished. The strategies and action items should also be quantifiable and unambiguous so that there is a clear determination of when they have been accomplished.

The plan for Pomona, CA includes short- and long-term strategies and links them directly to indicators of progress:

Short-Term Strategies for Implementing New Tested, Effective Programs

1. Implement the *Strengthening Multi-Ethnic Families and Communities Program* in the established neighborhood groups.
 - Determine resource needs for program implementation.
 - Identify program partner(s) to deliver the program.
 - Work with program partner(s) to develop an implementation and evaluation plan for *Strengthening Multi-Ethnic Families and Communities Program*.
 - Secure program funding.
 - Implement the program according to the program implementation plan.
2. Implement the *Across Ages* program by creating a five to ten member youth service collaborative to align their programs with this model.
 - Determine resource needs for program implementation.
 - Identify program partner(s) to deliver the program, e.g. Community Wellness Partnership, PUSD Peer Resources, Boys and Girls' Club, etc.
 - Develop an implementation and evaluation plan for *Across Ages*.
 - Secure program funding.
 - Implement the program according to the program implementation plan.

Long-Term Strategies for Implementing New Tested, Effective Programs

1. For each program, evaluate program implementation (the degree to which the program is implemented according to the implementation plan) as well as evaluating participant outcomes (the degree to which the program produces the desired knowledge, attitude, skills or behavioral changes in participants).
2. Refine programs as needed based on evaluation results.
3. Share program results with funders and the community.
4. If program evaluation warrants, secure funding for program expansion.

5. Expand program(s) to additional youth and families.

12. **Implementation Plan** – An implementation plan should include who will be held responsible for accomplishing certain tasks, how tasks will be funded, when tasks will be accomplished, and if there are follow-up steps that will need to happen once tasks have been completed. An implementation plan can be located in separate section or embedded into content areas and described in conjunction with goals, objectives and strategies.
13. **Timeline** – A timeline for accomplishing the goals, objectives and strategies of the plan can either be a stand alone component or combined with an implementation plan. The timeline should also include deadlines for evaluations and updates.
14. **Evaluation or Monitoring Plan** – A plan should be described to evaluate or monitor the YMP to make sure it remains relevant to the specific issues in the community and that the goals, objectives, and strategies are being accomplished. The process for monitoring the YMP should be outlined and include who should do it, what methods should be used, and how often it should occur. In addition, indicators of success can be included in the evaluation plan or linked directly to the objectives and strategies to help a community determine what the outcomes are and when it has accomplished

them. This in turn may make it easier for a community to identify what resources should be put toward implementing and/or updating the YMP.

15. ***Update Plan*** – As a natural component to follow the evaluation and monitoring plan is a detailed outline for updating the YMP. This should describe how often an update will occur, who will facilitate it, how it will be paid for, who will be involved, and the process for gathering information.
16. ***Two-Dimensional Map(s)*** – Two-dimensional plans and maps should clarify or supplement specific information included in the YMP. They should be used to provide a clear picture of the current situation in the community, such as the location of youth-oriented places. They should also be used to identify areas of the community that need improvement. For example, if a community recommends making services more accessible by multi-use trails and a bus system, a map showing the residential areas, existing trails, bus routes, and service locations will identify areas that are not covered and need to be accommodated in the future. If maps are used during the creation process to identify specific needs, they should be included in the final YMP document to present the information.

I created the list above in order to provide a template for communities that would like to create a YMP. Although all of these components will be useful based on my findings, it is important for each community to take stock of what information it

already has and what it will be able to accomplish given its available resources.

Although a section of a YMP document could be devoted to each component on this list, it is also possible to combine certain components to streamline a plan without jeopardizing its usefulness.

In addition to the recommended components, specific plans can be used as models for specific focus areas. Communities looking to include similar focus areas can use the YMPs listed in Table 8.1 as examples. However, a good plan is context specific. Therefore, I recommend that communities always gather data within their own community to determine the major focus areas.

Table 8.1: Model youth master plans

Focus Area	Recommended Model Plan	Comments
Physical Environment	Temecula, CA	The strategies and action plan includes recommendations for community facilities and transportation.
	Hampton, VA	The plan includes goals and objectives to create places for youth in the community and provide youth-friendly transportation.
	Santa Clarita, CA	The plan includes recommendations regarding entertainment facilities, recreational spaces, and infrastructure. The plan states how different topics are also addressed in other community plans.
Youth Participation	Hampton, VA	Plan includes goals and objectives focused on participation in community governance and everyday life.
	Portland/Multnomah County, OR	The plan focuses on engaging youth in most city/county bureaus and includes challenges and specific recommendations.
	Palo Alto, CA	Goal #1 of the plan focuses on youth participation with recommended short and long term action steps.

Table 8.1 Con't.

Focus Area	Recommended Model Plan	Comments
Diversity	Diamond Bar, CA	Strategy area III focuses on accessibility and social inclusion.
Access to Services	Chesapeake, VA	The plan includes strategies and performance outcomes for aligning youth services with the principles in the plan.
Coordination/ Collaboration	Virginia Beach, VA	Goals #1 & #2 discuss collaborating on youth issues with short/long term goals and indicators of success.
	Newport News, VA	The plan includes several goals focused on collaboration between different entities such as youth, adults, and city departments.
	Pomona, CA	Goal #4 focuses on creating a collaborative system to implement, evaluate, and sustain the youth master plan.
Digital Media/Technology	San Jose, CA	The plan focuses heavily on education, skill development, and job readiness, specifically related to technology.
Community Building	Albany, CA	Goal #1 focuses on mobilizing their community to support young people. An implementation plan is provided for each strategy.
	Claremont, CA	Goal #1 focuses on getting the entire community involved and includes immediate, short and long term steps.
OVERALL PLAN	Temecula, CA	Plan focuses on many of the issues highlighted in research and is well organized.
	Hampton, VA	Plan is based on years of experience engaging youth in the community and has been revised a number of times.
	Roanoke, VA	Plan includes nine focus areas with action strategies and an implementation plan for each.

Youth Master Planning Best Practices

Based on the recommendations and lessons learned from other communities, I developed the following list of best practices:

- 1) **Engage as many stakeholders as possible, including the general public**, in the youth master planning process to keep them informed and excited about the work being done;
- 2) Get **buy-in** from community leaders and policy makers and **obtain a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** if appropriate;
- 3) Use creative methods to **actively involve youth** in the process;
- 4) Develop **clear goals and a vision** for the plan in order to streamline the process;
- 5) **Research what other communities have done** before reinventing the wheel or making unnecessary mistakes;
- 6) **Take advantage of academic research** to determine best practices and current theories regarding better environments for children and youth;
- 7) Form an interdisciplinary **leadership committee** that includes planners and landscape architects to coordinate the planning efforts;
- 8) Ensure that **evaluation and monitoring are budgeted** and planned for ahead of time;
- 9) **Maintain staff** who can oversee the implementation of the plan;
- 10) **Secure funding** to complete the entire process.

In the following sections I describe how YMPs align with the planning theories I described in Chapter Two as well as the building blocks of child-friendly cities.

Connection to Planning Theories

Youth Master Planning aligns with the **normative framework of advocacy planning** in many ways. In the 1960s, advocacy planners focused primarily on the needs of low-income populations who were often considered those without power (Heskin, 1980, p. 58). Similarly, the intent of a YMP is to advocate on behalf of children and youth, a group without political power, to ensure their needs are met. To an extent, simply having a YMP is a way to educate the community about the needs of children and youth as an under-represented group. Although, I was not able to determine if the general public, including children and youth, is aware of the YMP in any given community, 30 out of 38 YMP documents are available on the Internet. This begins to raise community awareness about the needs of children and youth. Raising the awareness of disenfranchised populations is one element of advocacy planning.

In addition, YMPs focus heavily on the social aspects of community life for children and youth. Similarly, Davidoff prompted planners to focus more on social aspects of a community, rather than just physical space (Davidoff, 1965). However, YMPs focus heavily on social aspects, covering the physical environment with only general normative statements. Ideally, a planning process, such as youth master planning, should include an emphasis on both, since both are critical to a healthy community.

One of the key components of advocacy planning is to support pluralism in the political agenda. However, political pluralism has been called a “well-constructed social myth” used to rationalize social programs for the disenfranchised (Mazziotti, 1974, p. 40). In making this argument and to stimulate debate, Mazziotti highlights several assumptions of pluralism that were not addressed by proponents of advocacy planning. Those assumptions include: the “participation between organized *groups* – and not individuals”; that no “one single elite group dominates decision making in every substantive area” (p.41); that individuals actively participate in a variety of organizations; that elections are a “viable instrument of mass participation in political decisions (p. 43); and finally that there is an operational system of decision-making that “conforms to principles of representative democracy” (p. 44).

Although these criticisms were made in 1974, they are still relevant when applying advocacy planning theory to youth master planning today. Many of the assumptions of pluralism would not apply to a community of children and youth who do not have the legal right to vote in elections, do not have full control of their available time to participate in organizations because of compulsory education, and, in most cases, cannot hold an elected position if they are younger than 18 years of age. I propose that a modified form of advocacy planning that does not require true “political pluralism” can be a model for further development of youth master planning.

This modified form of advocacy planning would encourage participation that is not limited to formally organized groups (i.e. Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts), but also includes individual youth and informal groups (i.e. youth gathered at a skatepark). In addition, every effort should be taken to ensure that diverse youth voices are included in decision-making, and if necessary, adults help youth understand the issues or topics that are being discussed. Youth councils, although not perfect forums for youth participation, could also be used to give youth perspectives a greater role in community decision-making.

Participatory planning integrates the rational and consensual aspects of planning (Smith, 1973, p. 281). Youth master planning follows the **normative framework of participatory planning** by focusing on both the process (the consensual) and the creation of a final product (the rational).

The YMPs focus heavily on providing opportunities for youth participation, including opportunities in community decision-making and informal participation in everyday life. Percy-Smith (2010, p. 108) argues that avoiding a preoccupation with political forms of participation can widen opportunities for participation shaped by citizens themselves. Encouraging both formal and informal participation through the YMPs may help achieve this.

Unfortunately, YMPs did not typically recommend specific ways that participation should occur, other than to specify the format, such as a youth council. In addition, one element of participatory planning is that plans and programs be “endorsed, supported, and created by the recipients” (Smith, 1973, p. 280). Although children and youth are included in most youth master planning processes (87 percent of YMPs or 33 out of 38, specifically mention getting the input of children and youth during the creation process) in some cases that participation involved simply filling out a questionnaire or participating in a focus group. Those forms of consultation do not necessarily qualify as “endorsed, supported, and created.” In fact, according to Hart’s ladder of participation (Hart, 1997, p. 41), consultation of this kind would fall within the lower levels of genuine participation. However, if the children and youth filling out the questionnaire do not fully understand what they are being asked to do or how they are contributing to the youth master plan creation process, it may not be considered participation at all.

In certain ways, YMPs also align with the **normative paradigm of collaborative planning**. In most cases, YMPs include multiple stakeholders in the creation process. And in some cases, communities established a separate committee of diverse stakeholders to help oversee the YMP creation. In addition, as discussed earlier, coordination and collaboration of various community entities was often an outcome of creating a YMP.

Yet, one major stakeholder group included in the creation of most YMPs is children and youth themselves. Without the same rights as adults in a community, it is unclear if the collaboration is simply consultation on their needs or actual participation in the creation of policy. The differences in power between adults and young people may be an important consideration if a youth master planning process is to become true collaboration, with the end-goal of consensus-building.

Finally, the alignment of YMPs with **insurgent or radical planning** is slightly harder to assess. YMPs in general do not focus as much on establishing the rights of children and youth at levels equal to that of adults, as they do on improving the situation in the community for children and youth. Therefore, in most cases YMPs do not attempt to realign the unequal levels of power called for by insurgent planning. Yet, YMPs do attempt to address the needs of diverse children and youth, also a goal of insurgent planning.

Furthermore, insurgent planning is often characterized by the grass-roots efforts of non-planners (Miraftab, 2009, p. 41). Only one YMP was youth-initiated. And although youth councils are heavily involved in the creation of YMPs, they are not leading the process.

Many of the YMPs focus on leadership skill development and discuss youth in terms of becoming engaged community members either immediately or in the future, potentially preparing them to be insurgent planners. However, if communities did not list this as an outcome in the questionnaire, I have little data with which to determine if this goal is accomplished and whether youth do indeed become participants in an insurgent planning process in the future.

Connection to Child-Friendly City Work

Although the YMPs do not mention the child-friendly city (CFC) work being done by UNICEF and other groups, they do align in their mission to create better communities for children and youth. In addition, when I compare YMPs to the nine building blocks of a CFC, there are a number of similarities.

Children's participation is the first building block and is also one of the top focus areas for YMPs. The establishment of a **children's rights unit or coordinating mechanism** is one of the building blocks. YMPs also focus on coordination and collaboration between departments and organizations, and either recommend the development of a committee to oversee the implementation of the YMP or are housed in an existing department that takes on that task.

The building blocks include a systematic **impact assessment and evaluation**.

Although some of the YMPs also include steps for monitoring and evaluation, it is not always systematic and is sometimes not conducted. The building blocks also include the establishment of a **children's budget**. Again, this is something that some of the YMPs have included, yet the resources provided are often in the form of staff time, rather than financial resources.

Finally, the building blocks include the creation of a **regular state of the city's children report**. Since many of the YMPs include a short assessment and report on the state of the children and youth in the community, it could be seen as the first of these reports. However, because YMPs are not updated as frequently as needed, they do not necessarily represent a *regular* state of the children report.

One way YMPs differ from the building blocks is the lack of emphasis on children's rights. The building blocks contain several references to children's rights including: providing a **legal framework to protect children's rights**; developing a **city-wide rights strategy**; making **children's rights known**; and supporting the **independent advocacy for children's rights** by non-governmental and human rights institutions. Yet, in all but one instance, this is not an emphasis of YMPS.

The one exception is the Portland/Multnomah County Report for the Bill of Rights for Children and Youth. Although this document is not called a youth master plan, I included it in this study because it has a similar purpose to YMPs. Yet, unlike other YMPs, it focuses heavily on the rights of children and youth. Other communities in the US that I did not include in this study also have Children's Bills of Rights but they do not include the supplemental report that Portland/Multnomah County does.

Future Research Directions

My study on YMPs is exploratory and is the first of its kind to provide a detailed overview of YMPs in the United States. However, I acknowledge several limitations of this research.

Limitations

First, the small number of YMPs (38) I collected for analysis **limits the statistical significance** of comparisons between the documents.

Second, **each community is different and faces context specific challenges.**

Therefore each planning solution, including YMPs, should reflect the specific needs of its population. Since I relied on the answers of people who may or may not understand all the issues and challenges present in each specific community, my assessment of how the YMPs address those issues is limited. However, without being

a member of each community myself, and with limited time to build rapport with members of each community, I needed to trust the knowledge of those key people.

A third limitation is the **relative absence of youth perspectives**. YMPs are essentially created to address the issues of young people and make communities better places to grow up. However, other than youth council members, it is extremely hard to identify which youth were involved in the creation of a YMP or who knows enough about it to answer questions.

Although this is something I tried to address by conducting interviews with youth, I was not able to overcome this limitation. I relied on snowball sampling to identify potential youth to interview, first interviewing the adult most familiar with the YMP and then asking them to identify potential youth interviewees. In one community I was told that youth were not directly involved with the YMP and would not be able to answer my questions. In another community, I was given the name of a former high-school student who currently worked for the city and I was able to set up the interview. However, at the scheduled time, the person was not available and did not return my follow-up phone calls to reschedule so I was not able to conduct the interview. In a third community, the adult I interviewed did not want to give out the contact information for youth council members but was willing to contact the youth

himself about doing an interview with me. After several follow-up attempts, I did not receive youth names to contact about an interview.

It was only in one community that I was able to conduct an interview with a college student who was a former high-school participant of the community's YMP creation process. This interview proved to be a very important source of information.

Finally, a fourth limitation to my research is that **YMPs are just one specific type of plan** that focuses on creating better communities for children and youth. It is quite possible that an emphasis on young people is integrated into other community plans. Due to time constraints, I chose to focus only on YMPs as a particular type of planning document and did not evaluate other types of plans. This limitation in particular leads to an important area of future research that I discuss in the next section.

Based on my findings and the limitations of my research, I identify eight areas for future research and describe them below.

Involvement of Urban Planners in Youth Master Planning

As I discussed earlier, land use planners were surprisingly absent from the youth master planning processes that I studied. Since I found a close connection between

the practice of youth master planning and the theoretical underpinnings of advocacy planning and participatory planning, youth master planning is a missed opportunity for the planning profession.

One possible explanation for this lack of participation is that land use planners focus more heavily on issues such as the environment and transportation. In a 1978 study of planners' attitudes toward five major planning issues, Howe and Kaufman (1981) found that planners were most committed to issues of environmental protection and mass transit. Citizen participation and low-income/minority groups were also areas of interest, but less so (p. 275). Although this study is more than 30 years old, it may still be true that planners are less concerned with citizen participation and low-income/minority issues than issues such as transportation planning and climate change.

Some evidence for this includes the number of recent articles published on these topics. I conducted a search for words appearing in the abstracts of articles published in the *Journal of the American Planning Association* between 2000 and 2010. The word "environmental" appeared in 68 articles. "Transport*" ¹⁷ appeared in 66 articles. "Participat*" appeared in 41 abstracts. "Diversity" appeared in 17 abstracts. "Child"

¹⁷ Using partial search terms with an asterisk instructs the search program to include words that contain the root indicated. For example, searching for transport*, will show abstracts with transport or transportation.

appeared in 14 abstracts. “Low-income” appeared in 13 abstracts. “Minority” appeared in nine abstracts. And “youth” appeared in only one abstract.

Although this was a very simple query, the results show that more research is being published, and potentially conducted, about transportation and the environment than about children, youth, participation, and issues related to minority populations and diversity. Although academic research and practice do not always coincide, it is quite possible that practicing planners are also focusing more on transportation and environmental issues.

Along those lines, the American Planning Association website (<http://www.planning.org/divisions/>) lists numerous topical divisions that members can join. There is a “transportation planning division” and an “environment, natural resources, and energy division”. However, there is no division for working with children and youth, or community participation. A more thorough evaluation of the current values and focus areas for practicing planners is warranted to gain a better sense of how many planners focus on children and youth issues through their work.

Planners should take a larger role in youth master planning. In her 1980 article, titled, “Role Choices of Urban Planners” Howe suggests three primary roles for planners, including a technical model, a political model and a hybrid model (Howe, 1980, p.

398). This study acknowledges that planners take on both technical and political roles. Youth master planning follows the hybrid model, requiring both technical expertise in coordinating a planning process and writing an effective plan, as well as a political, value-laden belief system that focuses on advocating for the needs of children and youth.

Evaluation of Other Community Plans

Communities often have separate plans to address several of the topic areas that I identified in this study. For example, transportation is an area that I discuss in relation to YMPs, but it is also common for communities to have a separate transportation plan. Since I was not able to collect and evaluate these other plans to identify if and how they address the needs of children, youth and families, I recommend this as an area for future research.

One possible way to approach this research is to select ten communities (five that have YMPs and five relatively equivalent communities that do not have YMPs) as case studies. A researcher could then conduct an analysis of the plans available in each community to determine how they address the topic areas relevant to children and youth and to see if there is overlap between the different plans and the YMPs. Based on my research, potential plan types include: parks and recreation plans, housing plans, transportation plans, and comprehensive plans. These separate plans

may provide additional insights into how communities ensure children and youth needs are being met.

Coordination and Collaboration

Within the context of YMPs, I was not able to carefully analyze how YMPs discuss coordination and collaboration, but only that they referred to the general idea. I found the topic of coordination and collaboration to be the fourth most prevalent one identified during the content analysis. Since the youth master planning process and the actual plan document for some communities leads to an increase in the coordination between entities around children and youth issues and services, I suggest this as an area for further research.

Strategies for Addressing Population Diversity

Among the sub-themes of diversity and equal representation, there is an interesting difference in how diversity is addressed. For some communities, they purposefully avoid targeting specific populations of young people, preferring instead to accommodate all populations. Other communities indicate a desire to accommodate specific populations that are underserved, sometimes identifying which populations to target with their programs and services. Although the communities I interviewed indicate that more general goals regarding diversity are sufficient to accommodate their needs, this is an area that warrants further research. Additionally, what is most

effective is likely different depending on the specific community governance structure in place and how easily strategies can be implemented or changed.

Youth Councils and Youth Participation on Adult Boards

Youth participation on youth councils and participation on adult community boards are ideas promoted by many of the YMPs. Despite the prevalence of these ideas, research primarily conducted in countries other than the US questions whether they are effective means of youth participation in decision-making. Specifically, scholars question whether the format of an adult board is appropriate and/or engaging for young people, whether youth are taught the skills and knowledge to meaningfully participate on an adult board, whether the inclusion of only a few youth on an adult board creates participation that is tokenistic, and whether youth councils only provide an opportunity for well-resourced youth (Vromen, 2008, p. 5).

Because of the serious discrepancies between the research on these two ideas and what YMPs are promoting, there is a need for additional research in the United States context. Since some communities have already established the practice of youth membership on adult community boards and of youth councils, it should be possible to determine if they facilitate meaningful youth participation in community decision-making.

Why Youth Do Not Participate

Although communities mentioned a desire to recruit additional young people to participate in community opportunities, YMPs generally omit specific strategies for addressing this critical issue. In addition, scholars have begun to explore the barriers that affect youth participation, such as the jargon-filled, time-consuming nature of local decision-making, the skeptical attitudes of adults about young people's ability and interest to participate, and the disinterest of young people (Matthews, 2001, p. 156). In addition, other reasons emerged during the Growing Up in Frankston project in Australia (Percy-Smith & Malone, 2001). Those include: young people do not expect participation opportunities to be available and include them; young people do not realize they can contribute to their community and demand opportunities to participate; and young people assume their ideas will not be taken seriously and acted on (p. 21).

Although suggestions for overcoming these barriers have been proposed, such as flexible engagement approaches and providing "front-line staff" to work with youth (Matthews, 2001, p. 157), more research is needed to test the effectiveness of these measures. As an area for future research, communities with YMPs could help assess this.

Plan Quality Evaluation

Plan quality evaluation research is an emerging area of planning research. Although most of the plans included in this type of research are focused on hazard mitigation, sustainable development, watershed management, and smart growth (Berke & Godschalk, 2009, p. 230), it nevertheless provides a basis for evaluating plans such as YMPs.

Although considerably fewer communities currently create YMPs than other types of plans, such as comprehensive plans or mitigation plans, as YMPs become increasingly popular, there may be value in determining what makes a “good” YMP. Plans in general are not routinely evaluated using accepted plan quality standards (Berke & Godschalk, 2009, p. 227; Baer, 1997, p. 329). Although exact reasons for this are unknown, researchers have speculated that it is due in part to the varying views on the purpose of plans and their context-specific nature that is designed to address the needs and objectives of individual communities (Berke & Godschalk, 2009, p. 228). In addition, outside evaluators are often not able to discern the choices that are made during the planning process. For example, it is difficult to know whether technical inadequacies are due to political demands for additional flexibility or due to professional incompetence (Baer, 1997, p. 340).

It is difficult to evaluate the outcomes of planning documents that are visionary and that do not have clear cause and effect relationships. For a YMP, the long-term impact, the changing conditions of the community, and compounding variables such as the presence of a youth council, make it difficult to evaluate the outcomes of each plan and compare them to outcomes experienced by other communities. However, plan quality evaluation can serve as a learning process in order to determine how to improve them (Berke & Godschalk, 2009, p. 228). Therefore, this is a direction for future research.

Policy Context for YMPs

Although I found that groups such as the National League of Cities, Institute for Youth, Education and Families promote the creation of youth master plans, it is unclear which groups promote their creation at the state, county and city level. Only three communities indicated that the impetus for their YMP creation was the vision of an individual leader in the community. However, beyond that it is unclear if there is a top-down mandate to create YMPs. In order to gain a better understanding of what policies influence the creation of YMPs, I recommend additional research.

Despite the limitations and numerous areas for future research, I discuss several implications for my research in the following section.

Implications

Implications for Practice

Based on the interviews I conducted and the answers to the questionnaire, I found that most communities with YMPs find them generally worthwhile. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that other communities interested in becoming more child- and youth-friendly may also want to create one. When beginning the creation process, **communities may be interested in learning from what other communities have done**, including what has been successful and what has been unsuccessful. As exploratory research, my findings are an important first step in the development of recommendations that will lead to higher quality, and thus more useful, YMPs.

A second implication relates to the process of creating a YMP and what **role planners and designers take in that process**. Although master plans are historically a tool created by planners and landscape architects, YMPs instead often fall under the direction of youth workers, education specialists or others who have experience working with young people. However, based on my findings I believe planners and landscape architects need to become more involved in the process of creating YMPs.

According to the American Planning Association 2008 survey, 98 percent of planners (N=944) “believe they can play a role in helping communities become family friendly” (Israel & Warner, 2008, p. 2). If additional research related to plan quality

evaluation is conducted, planners will better understand how to create successful YMPs as one way of helping communities become family friendly.

Implications for Research

Through my study, I found that **it is critical to obtain the perspective of all stakeholders in a participatory planning process**. Although it is important to get the perspective of the decision-makers in a community or the people who write plans and facilitate planning processes, it is also important to purposefully solicit the input from the people who are impacted by the YMP and who participate in the activities to create the process. Although I found this extremely hard to do, within the one community (Brighton, CO) in which I was able to interview a young person, the difference of opinion between the staff member and former high-school student was striking in several instances.

For future research on YMPs or other planning efforts that will involve the participation of children and youth, I recommend a more localized approach. I found that trying to conduct phone interviews with youth, who I hadn't formed a relationship with or did not have previous knowledge of, was extremely challenging. Adult gatekeepers are rightly protective of youth identities and it is difficult to involve youth when the research being conducted may not have any direct benefit for

them other than an opportunity to reflect on a planning process. Focus groups or in-person interviews may be a more effective approach to access youth opinions.

A second implication for research involves the use of multiple methods. As described in “Chapter Three: Research Methods”, I used three different methods to gather and analyze my data. These included a self-administered online questionnaire sent to staff members in 38 communities, a content analysis of 38¹⁸ YMP documents, and seven semi-structured telephone interviews with staff, a consultant, and former high-school student in four different communities. I found that, although time-consuming, this **multiple-method approach was essential in accomplishing my research tasks.**

The three different methods enabled me to triangulate my data and develop a better overview of YMPs. For example, the interviews enabled me to get more in-depth responses from a small number of people and follow-up on information presented in the YMP documents. In contrast, the questionnaire enabled me to obtain quantitative information about a large number of YMPs and easily compare what communities are doing. Both the interviews and the questionnaire were completed by individuals and include their opinion and experience of what was done in their community. To go beyond this, I completed a content analysis of the YMP documents to evaluate the rhetoric that each community chose to include in their official plan and see how this

¹⁸ The 38 communities that received the questionnaire are not the exact same communities that I included in the content analysis. I explain the reason for this in “Chapter Three: Research Methods”.

might reinforce or differ from the opinions of interviewees. In addition, these three methods enabled me to see what was planned versus what was actually accomplished in each community since many plans had been adopted several years earlier.

Although multiple methods may not be warranted in specific situations, it can be appropriate for planning research that includes the evaluation of both a product and a process. For example, although most YMPs briefly describe the creation process, in some cases it is not described at all. If I had conducted only a content analysis, it would have been impossible to get a full picture of what YMPs are used for and how they are created. Similarly, conducting interviews or administering a questionnaire without analyzing the actual YMP documents would have left me with multiple gaps in my findings.

These methods enabled me to develop a comprehensive understanding of youth master planning. As a process that can result in a recognition of youth's assets, a focus on youth engagement in the community, and an increase in collaboration between departments or agencies, benefits of youth master planning can be help create better environments for children and youth.

APPENDIX A

COPY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is the text included on the questionnaire. However, the formatting was created online using SurveyMonkey.com.

We are asking you to fill out this questionnaire because you are/were involved in the creation or implementation of a youth master plan for your community. We understand these plans have different names such as 'strategic plan for children and families' but we are using 'youth master plan' as a generic term for this type of document.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out about the creation process of your youth master plan, the purpose and/or main focus of the plan, and the processes used to maintain it and evaluate its effectiveness.

This study is sponsored by the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design at the University of Colorado. By answering the following questions, you will be contributing to a national research project aimed at creating

more youth-friendly communities. All of your answers will be kept confidential. If you would like a copy of the results from this survey, please answer yes to the final question.

If you would like to know more about the Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design, visit our website at www.cudenver.edu/cye.

Thank you for participating!

Section I: Background Information

1. What community was your youth master plan created for?
2. Which department do you work for?
3. What is your official position?
4. Which department is your youth master plan housed in?
 - a. Same as question 2.
 - b. Other, please specify.
5. What year did your community start the process of developing a youth master plan?
6. What is the current status of the youth master plan?
 - a. We have a first draft/outline.

- b. We are very close to completing the final draft.
- c. We have a final adopted plan that we are implementing.
- d. We have a final adopted plan but are not working with it right now.
- e. We are currently revising the plan.
- f. Other, please specify.

Section II: Adoption of the Youth Master Plan

- 7. Has the youth master plan been formally adopted?

Section III: Implementation of the Plan

- 8. Indicate what year your youth master plan was adopted and describe the process for adoption (e.g. formally voted on by City Council).
- 9. Is the plan currently being implemented?
- 10. If yes, please give examples of how the plan is being implemented and what actions have been taken to accomplish the goals in the plan.
- 11. What resources are available to help implement the plan?
 - a. Human resources (please specify below)
 - b. Financial resources (please specify below)
- 12. What is/was the biggest challenge or barrier in the implementation of your youth master plan?

13. Please indicate the level of training that adults in the community receive regarding the goals and purpose of the youth master plan and how to use it:

	None	Basic/Minimal Training	Average Training	Extensive Training
Staff and elected officials in decision-making				
Staff working directly with youth				
Staff working on policies and/or services that affect youth (e.g. transportation services)				

14. Is the plan enforceable? (e.g. is there a way to legally require community members to accomplish the objectives of the plan or abide by the guidelines?)
- a. Yes
 - b. No

Section IV: Enforcement of the Plan

15. Who enforces the plan (e.g. City Council)?
16. What resources are available to help enforce the plan?
- a. Human resources (please specify below)
 - b. Financial resources (please specify below)

Section V: Updating the Plan

17. How often is the youth master plan updated/scheduled for updates?
- a. No updates are scheduled.
 - b. Once every 1 to 6 months.
 - c. Once every 6 to 12 months.
 - d. Once a year.
 - e. Once every 2 years.
 - f. Once every 3 to 5 years.
 - g. Once every 6 to 10 years.
18. Is someone in charge of ensuring your youth master plan is kept up to date?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
- If yes, please write their name and position.

Section VI: Content of the Plan

19. Please indicate the main or multiple areas of focus for your youth master plan.
Please be as specific as possible.
20. What are the main outcomes that your community's youth master plan hopes to achieve? Please be as specific as possible.
21. Which (if any) specific populations of young people does your youth master plan target? (Check all that apply)

- a. None
- b. Young people in low-income families
- c. Young people in middle-income families
- d. Young people in high-income families
- e. First and second-generation immigrant young people
- f. Young people with developmental disabilities
- g. Young people with physical disabilities
- h. Young people with delinquency problems
- i. Homeless young people
- j. Young people who identify with a racial minority
- k. Babies/toddlers
- l. Elementary school age children
- m. Middle school age youth
- n. High school age youth
- o. Families
- p. Other, please specify

Section VII: Creation Process

22. What was the impetus for creating the youth master plan? Please be specific and give an example.

23. Please indicate the level of involvement by the following stakeholders:

	Not involved at all	Slightly involved	Involved	Extremely Involved	NA
Mayor					
City Council/Board of Trustees					
County Commissioners					
Land use planning staff					
Transportation planners/engineers					
Legal staff					
Youth council/board members					
Local youth NOT part of youth council/board					
School district personnel/staff					
Teachers/staff at individual schools					
Human resources staff					
Environmental groups or staff					
Financial staff					
Private sector					
Community non- profits serving youth					
Public works staff					
Police/Judicial system staff					
Other, please specify					

Section VIII: Budget

24. What was the amount allocated last year (2008) for the annual budget for implementation/enforcement of this plan?
- a. \$0
 - b. under \$5,000
 - c. \$5,000 to \$9,999
 - d. \$10,000 to \$19,999
 - e. \$20,000 to \$29,999
 - f. \$30,000 to \$39,999
 - g. \$40,000 to \$49,999
 - h. \$50,000 to \$59,999
 - i. \$60,000 to \$69,999
 - j. \$70,000 to \$79,999
 - k. \$80,000 to \$89,999
 - l. \$90,000 to \$99,999
 - m. more than \$100,000
25. If applicable, what is the source of the money?
26. If applicable, how are decisions made about spending the money?

Section IX: Monitoring/Evaluation

27. Do you currently monitor/evaluate your youth master plan?
- a. Yes

- b. No
- c. We haven't yet, but plan to in the future.

Section X: Monitoring and Evaluation Process

28. Please describe your process of monitoring/evaluating your youth master plan.

29. Are youth involved with this process?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes, please describe how youth are involved and give specific examples.

30. Have you made changes to your youth master plan as a result of the evaluation?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. N/A

If yes, please indicate what changes have been made. Please be specific and provide an example.

Section XI: Reflections/Suggestions

31. If you were to begin the process of creating a master plan all over again, would you do anything differently?

- a. Yes

b. No

32. If yes, what you would change? Please be specific.
33. What is the factor most responsible for the creation of your youth master plan? Be specific and provide an example.
34. What is the most significant thing that has happened as a result of your youth master plan? Please be specific and provide an example.
35. What recommendations do you have for other communities just beginning the process of creating a youth master plan? Please be specific and provide an example.

Thanks you!

36. Would you like a copy of the results from this survey?
- a. Yes
- b. No

APPENDIX B

CODING STRATEGIES FOR DOUBLE CODING

1. Everything should be coded. If it does not fit into a content oriented node, it goes into the non-coded node.
2. Code full sentences only, do not break up a sentence. Code in full paragraphs if it all applies to the same theme or if you need it for context of the coded sentence. Include headings in what is coded if it is directly adjacent to the relevant passage. For example, the following sentence would all be coded in the information dissemination node:

“STRATEGY 8: Facilitate coordinated information and referral to services in the community.”
3. Code introduction text that lists names or explains the content included in the plan in the non-coded node. The only exception to this is if the text indicates that multiple departments, agencies, etc., are coordinating efforts to accomplish something. This type of passage should be coded under the “Collaboration and coordination of community efforts” node.
4. Code passages that indicate the status of what is true for youth in general or in the specific community in the “Background information and research code”.

In addition, anything that provides a definition or overview of a healthy child or a youth-friendly community goes into this node.

5. Appendices should go into the non-coded node.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The following questions are focused on the youth master plan in your community, titled [title of youth master plan]. I will ask you questions about your participation in the process that your community went through to create this document and what you think about the [title of youth master plan] as a way to make your community better for young people like yourself.

Please answer the questions as completely as possible. You can stop this interview at any time and for any reason.

Your answers are important to me and will help me determine the process [community name] used to create their youth master plan. This will in turn help other communities understand what strategies might work better for them.

This interview will last no more than one hour. At the end of the interview, I will make sure that I have your correct mailing address to send you your \$10 gift card. (The gift cards are only for youth interviewees.)

1. Did you participate in the creation of the youth master plan [title of the youth master plan] for [community name]?
 - a. If yes, in what ways did you participate? Please describe. [Go on to question 2.]
 - b. If no, why not? [At this point determine how the interviewee may have participated and adjust the questions accordingly.]
2. What specific activities did you participate in regarding the creation of the [title of the youth master plan]?
 - a. Who else participated in these activities for both adults and young people? Please describe.
 - b. Was there a diversity of young people who participated? Please describe.
 - c. Were there groups of young people who did not participate?

- i. If yes, which groups did not participate?
 - d. When and where did these activities take place?
 - e. Were the activities convenient for you?
 - f. How did you feel about the activities?
 - g. Were you clear on the intent of the activities?
 - i. What was it?
 - ii. Do you think the activities accomplished this purpose or intent?
 - h. Are there any changes to the activities that you would recommend?
- 3. Are you aware of the status of the [title of youth master plan] today? For example, has it been adopted or is it about to be voted on?
 - a. If yes, what is the status?
 - b. If no, why not? Have you heard any more about the youth master plan at all?
- 4. Are [community name] leaders or other groups using it to make changes to the community?
 - a. If yes, how are they using it? Please describe.
- 5. Are you aware of any changes in programs, places, or policies in [community name] which have occurred as a result of the creation of your youth master plan?
 - a. If yes, please describe these as best you can.
- 6. What is your opinion of the final youth master plan? Please explain.
- 7. Do you think the youth master plan addresses the needs and desires of the young people in your community?
- 8. Is there anything you would recommend be changed about the youth master plan? Please describe.
- 9. Do you think the youth master plan addresses the availability and character of physical places for youth, such as parks, playgrounds, and plazas?
 - a. If yes, how does the plan address these places?
- 10. Have you continued to participate in accomplishing some of the goals of the youth master plan?
 - a. If yes, please describe.
 - b. If no, why not?

11. Is there anything else about the [title of the youth master plan] that you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time.

APPENDIX D

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF COMMUNITIES¹⁹

1. **Albany, CA:** Albany is a small, relatively diverse city of 16,444 people, located in the San Francisco Bay area, bordering Berkeley, CA. The population is 66% white, 27% Asian, and 9% Hispanic. The median family income is \$64,000.
2. **Arcadia, CA:** Arcadia is a small city of 57,754 people, located in Los Angeles County. There is a high-level of diversity with only 35% of the population identifying as white and 45% identifying as Asian. The median family income is \$66,657.
3. **Claremont, CA:** Claremont is a small community of 34,933 people, located in Los Angeles County, CA. Claremont has a high median family income of \$102,138. Claremont is a college town known for its seven institutions of higher education. The population is 77% white and 19% Hispanic. The

¹⁹ The United States census website did not have demographic information on the HoChunk Nation so I did not create a description of it.

median family income is high at \$103,579.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Claremont,_Ca).

4. **Diamond Bar, CA:** Diamond Bar is a small city with 57,248 people, located in Los Angeles County. Diamond Bar has a high median family income of \$101,213 and is diverse, with 38% white and 50% of the population identifying as Asian. It is primarily a residential city
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diamond_Bar,_Ca).
5. **Indio, CA:** Indio is a fast growing city with a population of 69,691 people, located in the Coachella Valley of southern California, 125 miles east of Los Angeles. The median family income is \$56,105. Its population is 65% Hispanic. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indio,_California)
6. **La Canada Flintridge, CA:** La Canada Flintridge is a small city of 20,773 people, located in Los Angeles County. It is a fairly diverse city with 73% white and 31% Asian population. It has a very high median family income level at \$122,779. In addition the median home prices were \$1,321,367 in 2010. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Cañada_Flintridge,_California)

7. **North Fair Oaks, Unincorporated Redwood City, CA:** North Fair Oaks is a small community with a population of 17,346 located in San Mateo County, adjacent to Menlo Park. The area is referred to as Little Mexico, with 91% of the population identifying as Latino. The median family income is below the national average at \$45,569.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Fair_Oaks,_California)
8. **Oakley, CA:** Oakley is a small city of 31,130 people, located in Contra Costa County in the San Francisco Bay area. It is a fairly diverse community with 69% of the population identifying as white and 27% as Hispanic. The median family income is \$79,038. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakley,_California)
9. **Palo Alto, CA:** Palo Alto is a mid-size city of 63,370 people, located in Santa Clara County in the San Francisco Bay Area. Palo Alto is home to Stanford University and many Silicon Valley high-tech companies. Palo Alto has an Asian population totaling 17% and a white population totaling 70%. It also has a very high median family income of \$117,574.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palo_alto)
10. **Pleasanton, CA:** Pleasanton is a mid-size city with a population of 70,700, located in Alameda County and is a major suburb of San Francisco.

Pleasanton was ranked the wealthiest mid-size city in the US and has a very high median family income of \$117,898. The community is predominately white at 72%, with 9% of its population identifying as Hispanic.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleasanton,_California)

11. **Pomona, CA:** Pomona is a mid-size city with a population of 150,759, located in Los Angeles County. Pomona's population is diverse with 64% Hispanic and 43% white. The median family income is low at \$46,544. Pomona is home to the California Polytechnic Institute Pomona.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pomona,_California)

12. **San Jose, CA:** San Jose is the tenth largest city in the US with 905,180 people and is located in Santa Clara County, at the southern end of San Francisco Bay. San Jose is very diverse with 31% Hispanic, 31% Asian, and 51% white. San Jose has the nickname "The capitol of Silicon Valley" because of its many high-tech companies. The median family income is \$83,089. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/San_Jose,_California)

13. **Santa Ana, CA:** Santa Ana is a mid-size city with a population of 327,681, located in Orange County in Southern California. It is part of the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana metropolitan area. Hispanics make up 79% of the

population with whites at 49%. The median family income is \$76,092.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Ana,_California)

14. **Santa Clarita, CA:** Santa Clarita is a mid-size city with a population of 178,062, located in Los Angeles County. Santa Clarita is 76% white and 20% Hispanic. The median family income is \$82,386.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Clarita,_California)

15. **Sierra Madre, CA:** Sierra Madre is a very small city with a population of 10,578, located in Los Angeles County. The population of Sierra Madre is predominately white at 89%, with 6% Asian and 6% Hispanic. The median family income is \$79,588.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Clarita,_California)

16. **Temecula, CA:** Temecula is a small city of 44,950 people, located in Riverside County in southern California. Temecula is home to many military families from nearby bases. The population is predominately white at 74%, with 19% Hispanic. The median family income is \$79,042.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Temecula,_California)

17. **Thousand Oaks, CA:** Thousand Oaks is a mid to large city of 124,831 people, located in Ventura County in southern California. It is considered one of the safest large cities in the nation. Thousand Oaks was originally a master planned community and has a median home price of \$673,000. The population is predominately white at 84%, with 7% Hispanic and 6% Asian. The median family income is high at \$102,824.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thousand_Oaks,_California)

18. **Vacaville, CA:** Vacaville is a mid-size city of 91,287 people, located in Solano County in the northeastern portion of the San Francisco Bay area. Vacaville's population includes 72% white, 18% Hispanic, 10% African American. The median family income is 71,484.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vacaville,_California)

19. **Brighton, CO:** Brighton is a small city of 30,719 people, located in Adams and Weld County, north of the Denver metropolitan area. Brighton is 77% white and 38% Hispanic. The median family income is close to the National average at \$53,286. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brighton,_CO)

20. **La Plata County, CO:** La Plata County has a population of 49,594 and is located in southeastern Colorado. The county seat is Durango. La Plata

County is predominately white with 89% of the population identifying as white and 10% as Hispanic. The median family income is close to the national average at \$50,814.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_Plata_County,_Colorado)

21. **El Paso County, CO:** El Paso County is the second most populous county in Colorado with a population of 587,353. It is located in central Colorado and Colorado Springs is the county seat. The population is 85% white, 11% Hispanic and 7% African American. The median family income is \$64,888.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Paso_County,_Colorado)

22. **Manchester, CT:** Manchester has a population of 55,211 people and is located in Hartford County, in the northern central part of the state. Manchester is 76% white, 8% African American, and 7% Hispanic. The median family income is \$76,208. Manchester used the same consultant as Hampton, VA, Brighton, CO, and La Plata County, CO to create their youth master plan. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manchester,_ct)

23. **Broward County, FL:** Broward County is the second most populated county in the state with 1,754,846 people. It is located near the southern tip of Florida. The population is 68% white, 20% African American and 17%

Hispanic. The median family income is 17% lower than the national average at \$41,691. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broward_County,_Florida)

24. **Chatham County, GA:** Chatham County is a medium sized county of 247,833 people. Savannah is the county seat and it is located in the lower half of the state, on the Atlantic Ocean. The population is 56% white and 41% African American. The median family income is just above than the national Average at \$55,473. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chatham_County,_Georgia)

25. **Grand Rapids, MI:** Grand Rapids is large city of 193,242 people, located in Kent County in western Michigan. The population is relatively diverse with 69% white, 21% African American, and 16% Hispanic. The median family income is lower than the national average at \$45,938. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Rapids,_Michigan)

26. **Olmsted County, MN:** Olmsted County has a population of 139,191 people and is located in southern Minnesota. The county seat is Rochester. The population is predominately white with 90%, and the Asian population second at 4%. The median family income is \$79,912. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Olmsted_County)

27. **Omaha, NE:** Omaha is the largest city in Nebraska with 388,977 people and is located in Douglas County on the eastern border of the state. Omaha is 79% white, 12% African American and 11% Hispanic. The median family income is just above the national average at \$55,953.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Omaha,_Nebraska)

28. **Santa Fe, NM:** Santa Fe is the capital of New Mexico and is a mid-size city of 64,040 people, located in the northern central part of the state. Santa Fe is known for its multicultural character and its relatively high number of artists. The population is 82% and 44% Hispanic. The median family income is slightly above the national average at \$58,064.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Santa_Fe,_New_Mexico)

29. **Lakewood, OH:** Lakewood is a mid-size city with 54,210 people and is one of Cleveland's inner-ring suburbs located at the northern edge of the state. Lakewood has a high-density population, comparable to that of Washington, DC. Lakewood is predominately white with 93%, and 5% African American. The median family income is just over the national average at \$53,433. Business Week voted Lakewood the best place to raise kids in 2010.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lakewood,_Ohio)

30. **Portland/Multnomah County, OR:** Portland is a large city of 548,988 people and is the county seat of Multnomah County that has a total population of 699,482. Portland and Multnomah County are known for their commitment to children and youth. The city has a population that is 82% white, 9% Hispanic, 8% African American, and 8% Asian. The median family income in the city is \$62,183 and in the county is \$57,952.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portland_or)

31. **Charleston, SC:** Charleston is the second largest city in South Carolina with 111,980 people and is located in the southern half of the state on the Atlantic Ocean. Charleston's population is 68% white and 29% African American. The median family income is \$60,858.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charleston,_SC)

32. **Chesapeake, VA:** Chesapeake is a mid-size city of 106,319 people located in the Hampton Roads Metropolitan area along the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway. Chesapeake's population is 66% white and 29% African American. The median family income is \$56,302.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chesapeake,_Virginia

33. **Hampton, VA:** Hampton is a medium to large city of 146,154 people, located within the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. Hampton is very diverse with 48% white and 45% African American. The median family income is \$57,037. Hampton is well-known as being a leader in the area of youth master planning and its efforts spawned the consulting firm that has been hired to facilitate several other communities' youth master plans.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hampton,_Virginia)

34. **James City County, VA:** James City County is a county of 60,997, located within the Hampton Roads Metropolitan area. The cities of Jamestown and Williamsburg are both located with the county. James City County is 82% white and 14% African American. The median family income is \$80,728.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_City_County,_Virginia)

35. **Newport News, VA:** Newport News is a medium to large city of 180,745 people, located in the Hampton Roads metropolitan area. Newport News is 53% white and 39% African American. The median family income is \$80,728. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newport_News,_Virginia)

36. **Roanoke, VA:** Roanoke is a medium sized city of 92,679, located in the Roanoke Valley in the western half of Virginia. The population is 71% white

and 27% African American. The median family income is just below the national average at \$47,358. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roanoke,_Virginia)

37. **Virginia Beach, VA:** Virginia Beach is a large city of 435,553 people, located in the Hampton Roads metropolitan area at the mouth of Chesapeake Bay. Virginia Beach is known as a resort city. It has a population that includes 73% white and 12% African American. The median family income is \$73,874. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Virginia_beach,_va)

APPENDIX E

QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS

Community	ST	Department	Position
Claremont	CA	Human Services	Director
Diamond Bar	CA	Community Services	Community Services Coordinator
La Canada Flintridge	CA	Administration	Management Intern
North Fair Oaks and Redwood City	CA	City of Redwood City - City Manager's Office (fiscal agent of the collaborative body leading this effort)	Executive Director of Redwood City 2020 (community collaborative) of which City of Redwood City is a core member along with other community organizations and institutions
Oakley	CA	Recreation Division	Recreation Supervisor/ Recreation Specialist when the Master Plan was written
Palo Alto	CA	Community Services Department	Recreation Supervisor
Pleasanton	CA	City Managers Office	Assistant to the City Manager
Pomona	CA	Community Services	Youth and Family Services Manager
San Jose	CA	Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services	Youth Outreach Specialist
Santa Ana	CA	Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Agency	Recreation Superintendent
Santa Clarita	CA	Community Services	Community Services Administrator
Temecula	CA	Parks and Community Services Department	Director of Parks & Community Services
Thousand Oaks	CA	City Manager's Office	(when YMP created) Coordinator of Youth and Senior Services
Vacaville	CA	Initially a volunteer on Youth Roundtable - now working for school district	Wellness Coordinator, Vacaville Unified School District
Brighton	CO	Youth Resources	Youth Resources Coordinator
Durango, La Plata County	CO	Administration	Assistant County Manager
Manchester	CT	Office of Neighborhoods and Families	Director
Broward County	FL	Children's Services Council of Broward	Director of Research, Analysis, and Planning

Community	ST	Department	Position
		County	
Columbus	GA	Columbus Family Connection	Executive Director
Grand Rapids	MI	Our Community's Children	Executive Director
Santa Fe	NM	Community Services Department	Director of the Children and Youth Commission
Lakewood	OH	Human Services	Director
Portland and Multnomah County	OR	Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families, and Community (Non-Department)	Youth Development Specialist
Charleston	SC	City of Charleston, Mayor's Office for Children, Youth and Families	Program Coordinator, Youth Programs
Chesapeake	VA	Office of Youth Services	Youth Services Coordinator
Hampton	VA	Coalition for Youth	Director
James City County	VA	Community Services - Parks & Recreation Division	Human Services Coordinator
Newport News	VA	Department of Human Services	Deputy Director

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